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WARSAW PACT CONCEPTS AND CAPABILITIES  
FOR GOING TO WAR IN EUROPE: IMPLICATIONS  
FOR NATO WARNING OF WAR

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Director of  
Central  
Intelligence

**Top Secret**

# **Warsaw Pact Concepts and Capabilities for Going to War in Europe: Implications For NATO Warning of War**

**National Intelligence Estimate**

**Top Secret**

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**THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.**

**THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.**

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:*

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency.

***Abstaining:***

The Special Assistant to the Secretary for National Security, Department of the Treasury

***Also Participating:***

The Assistance Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistance Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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## SUMMARY AND KEY JUDGMENTS

### Likelihood of a NATO–Warsaw Pact War

1. Under present circumstances, it is highly unlikely that the Warsaw Pact nations, or the Soviets alone, would deliberately decide to attack member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In the Soviet view, the risks involved in a war with NATO would be extremely high. The Soviets regard the possibility that such a war could go nuclear with unpredictable consequences, perhaps including escalation to massive nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union, as a major threat to the existence of the USSR. The Soviets take a conservative view of NATO capabilities and understand that a stiff NATO defense might prevent a quick Pact victory, allowing time to bring into play the greater manpower and industrial reserves of the West. Concern that its East European allies might not fight loyally and effectively further constrains Moscow's planning for aggressive war. Moreover, the Soviets appear to rate more highly than we do the danger of China's taking advantage of a conflict in Europe to strike the USSR.

2. For these reasons, we believe that war in Europe would become likely only as a result of a profound change in the present political, military, or economic situation and would be preceded by a period of extreme tension in a crisis of unprecedented severity.

3. If, over a period of many months or several years, relations between the Western and Warsaw Pact nations deteriorated badly, the political, economic, and military posture of both alliances could be expected to change. If this were to occur, the judgments in this Estimate—drawn against the present political, economic, and military environment—might no longer be valid.

### Military Objectives in a War With NATO

4. If the Soviets decided to go to war with NATO, for whatever reason, it is highly likely that their principal military objective would be the rapid defeat of all NATO forces in Central Europe. Whether France became an objective would depend on the course of the

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campaign and the part the French played in it. In the Soviet view, only through a broad, rapid offensive campaign could the USSR hope to interrupt or prevent NATO from developing equal or, possibly in the longer run, greater combat potential in Europe. Soviet military writings  operations designed to achieve such a rapid, total victory over NATO forces.

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5. We judge it to be extremely unlikely that the Soviets might deliberately attack with limited force to achieve limited objectives, either as a first step in going to war with NATO or to obtain the upper hand in a crisis while attempting to avoid war. As a first step in a larger campaign, the limited-objective attack would have little or no military value in destroying or interrupting NATO force development. It would, in fact, completely sacrifice strategic surprise and ensure that NATO mobilization would not far lag that of the Pact.

6. As a device to secure an important political objective (for example, control of West Berlin or Hamburg) a limited-objective attack would have serious flaws in the Soviet view. First, Soviet leaders could not be confident that a limited-objective attack could succeed quickly enough to avoid an undesired broadening of the conflict. Secondly, the grave consequences of NATO response with nuclear weapons, however slight the chances, would seem to outweigh by far any potential gains. Even in the absence of war, such an action would signal the end of the era of "peaceful coexistence" and would inevitably throw NATO into serious preparations for war in Europe. Given their own conservative view of NATO's rapid mobilization capabilities in the short run, and the prospect of activating NATO's much greater industrial, manpower, and economic potential in the longer run, the Soviets could perceive an increasingly adverse balance of forces in Europe as NATO rose to the task of confronting what would be considered an extremely serious Soviet threat. Accordingly, we judge there is virtually no chance that the Soviets would initiate an attack to obtain limited objectives in the present military, political, and economic situation.

7. The Soviets evidently plan for military operations against NATO in three separate theaters: in the northwestern USSR and Scandinavia, in central and western Europe, and in southern Europe. Although a crisis leading to war could develop as easily on one of NATO's flanks as in the center, the Soviets would expect central Europe to be the decisive theater of a large-scale NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict.

#### Doctrine and Readiness

8. Soviet doctrine emphasizes a need for heavy superiority in the main battle areas, with strong reserves to ensure the momentum of the attack. Doctrine also stresses achieving surprise and, in general, the Soviets will strive to achieve both surprise and superiority. If forced to

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choose between them, the Soviets are likely to opt for force superiority: superiority in forces is real and affords advantages that are certain; surprise is a less tangible advantage and always runs some risk of compromise. In any event, Soviet strategy for war in Europe centers on seizing and holding the strategic initiative through prompt offensive action by all forces.

9. Another tenet of Soviet doctrine is joint action by all components of the military forces, each of which is considered to have a role—if only a contingent one—in any major operation. Related to this is the longstanding Soviet insistence on the importance of the economy, morale, and political stability of the nation in time of war. Because of these factors—especially in view of the risk of nuclear war—preparations throughout the Pact countries and armed forces can be expected as a prelude to any military venture.

10. The Soviets apparently believe that a period of increased tension, called the *Period of Threat* in Soviet usage, will precede any major use of military forces. The Soviets' heavy reliance on the warning that they believe such a period would provide is reflected in the peacetime readiness status of Pact forces, many of which require augmentation through mobilization before commitment to combat. They also recognize the chance that an enemy might drastically shorten this period of tension. Each Pact nation has a dual alert and callup system which provides both for the mobilization readiness of the national administration and economy and for the readiness, alerting, and mobilization of the armed forces. The key alert phases planned under this dual system are: *Increased National Defense Readiness* and *Full National Defense Readiness* for the national economies and *Increased Combat Readiness* and *Full Combat Readiness* for military forces.

#### How the Pact Would Go to War

11. Our judgments concerning our ability to sense that the Warsaw Pact is taking steps to enable it to go to war in the near future derive from our ability to monitor, on a near-real-time basis, the normal pattern of Soviet and East European civilian and military activity in peacetime. Our confidence in sensing Pact preparation for war is based on our judgment that significant early changes would almost certainly be initiated in a wide range of civilian and military activities as the Pact assumed a posture which would enable it to start a war.

12. The earliest indicators that the Soviet Union was taking steps which would enable it to initiate war in Europe would be potentially available as the Soviets and their Pact allies were making the decision to undertake them. Given the present structure of Soviet political and military leadership, the decision to prepare for or initiate war with

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NATO would necessarily be made by the full Politburo and almost certainly with the recommendation of the Defense Council. We cannot judge to what extent the counsel of East European leaders would be sought in the initial decisionmaking process, but sooner or later the commitment of principal East European political and military leaders would almost certainly be required because their support would be critical in the execution of a war with NATO.

13. Unusual activities on the part of the Pact leadership would raise US and NATO awareness of possible imminent Pact activity of some kind, and increase the likelihood that indications of actual preparations would be interpreted quickly. Strong signals could be reported to one of the NATO intelligence services directly from one of the Pact principals or staff members involved in the decision process. Nonetheless, such reporting probably would be difficult to evaluate if there were no corroborating evidence and would not, in itself, support a firm judgment that the Pact was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future.

14. A major concern of the Soviet leadership would be to guarantee the support and stability of the population and public institutions in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Representations to the regional leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union would probably be made, and a large-scale propaganda program to motivate the Soviet populace to support the decision to go to war would be planned or initiated. The more critical problem, in the Soviet view, would be the elicitation of support and maintenance of firm political control of the populace and public institutions of the principal East European allies. Eliciting and enforcing the support of the Soviet and East European population for a major attack on NATO could not be accomplished in a low-key manner. There would likely be clear indications of steps by the Pact leadership to ensure the political stability of the Warsaw Pact nations.

15. In preparing to initiate hostilities with NATO, the Soviets could not be certain whether the prospective war would be short or long, nuclear or nonnuclear, and as a matter of prudence would have to consider full civil and economic preparations from the start. The process of putting industrial, agricultural, and civil defense systems on a full war footing, whether begun before or after a war started, would be both disruptive and visible and would take weeks or months to work out, even with wholly adequate planning.

16. Soviet doctrine anticipates that a critical step in preparing the populace and national economy for war is the declaration of a state of *Increased National Defense Readiness*. The declaration, even if not published, would be widely communicated throughout the Soviet Union

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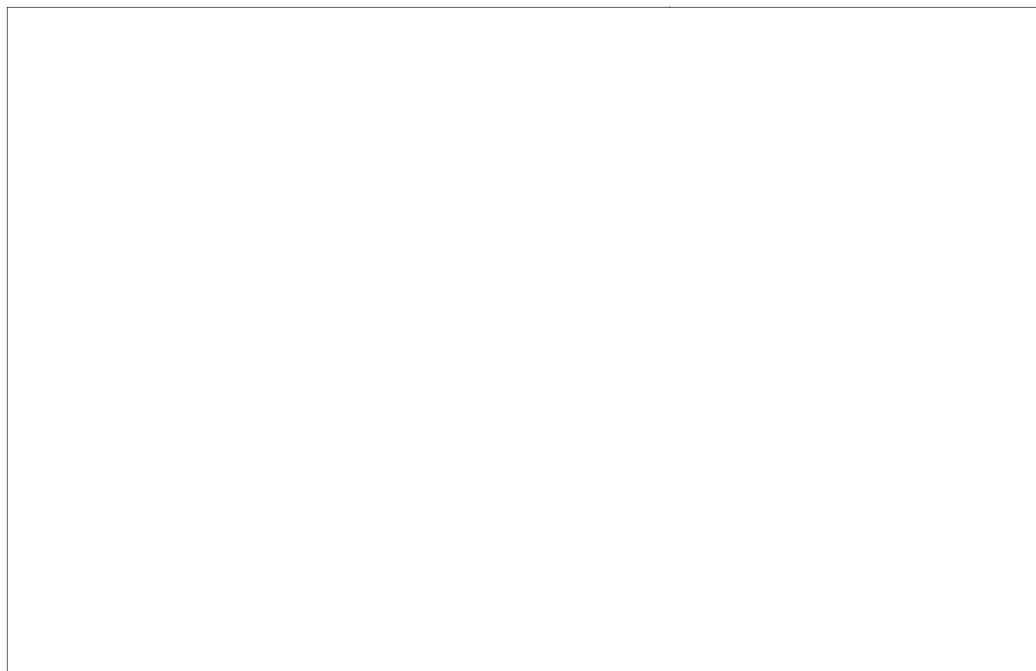
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and would, in itself, be a firm indication that the Soviets were preparing for the contingency of war. Similarly, declaration of a state of *Full National Defense Readiness*, even if not published, would be widely communicated and would, in itself, clearly signal the serious Soviet (or Pact) intent to prepare for war. The declaration and associated measures would be impossible to mask.

17. The Pact nations consider the normal peacetime posture of their forces to be a state of *Constant Combat Readiness*. The way in which the Pact would modify its military posture during a crisis would depend largely on the speed, urgency, and intensity with which the crisis developed:

- In a slowly developing crisis the Pact countries might move to institute *Increased Combat Readiness* (as defined in the table appended to chapter III). In such a condition a wide variety of measures might be undertaken, but these would fall far short of placing the Pact on a full war footing. The process need not be continuous; rather there probably would be periods of holding at interim levels.
- Once the Soviets had determined that the likelihood of war was high, the Pact's final preparations would be initiated by a decision to go to *Full Combat Readiness* (as defined in the above-cited table).

18. A key step in beginning the process of preparing military forces for the contingency of war is declaration of a state of *Increased Combat Readiness*. Indicators of preparatory measures necessary to achieve this level of readiness include:



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19. As the Pact moved from a posture of increased to full readiness, a much more visible set of activities would occur, including:

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#### Warning of War

20. For the purposes of this Estimate, we define warning as *an intelligence judgment clearly conveyed to national decisionmakers*

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*that the Warsaw Pact is taking steps to enable it to go to war in the near future and that the course of events has increased the likelihood of war in Europe.* This degree of warning, although it does not incorporate all of the elements of ideal warning, could be provided to national decisionmakers relatively rapidly and would provide an adequate basis for decisions concerning appropriate counterpreparations and other courses of action. We are unlikely to be able to be more definitive than this in our initial warning and foretell when the enemy will attack, where he will attack, or whether he will attack at all. The perceived pattern of activity on which the initial warning would be based is likely to be consistent with Soviet intentions other than a planned attack on NATO, such as: preparations to defend, take a stiffer stand, or achieve a better bargaining position in the crisis; or to take action in a different theater.

21. The Warsaw Pact nations, and particularly the Soviets, have the capability and the experience to employ many techniques of security, concealment, and deception that could affect our ability to detect or correctly interpret some indicators of their preparations for war. We would expect the Pact to employ such measures, but we judge that Pact security, concealment, and deception would not significantly degrade our ability to interpret quickly the sum of identified activities as preparations for war.

22. Once the Pact had made a decision that war is inevitable it would sanction at least selective interference with our intelligence collection. This could include space-based systems. While such interference would degrade Western intelligence, it would, in itself, constitute a strong warning indicator.

23. We are, in any case, confident of the ability of US and Allied intelligence to detect and interpret correctly a great number of indicators which would be given were the Pact to prepare for a large-scale war with NATO. We are confident that we could inform decisionmakers that the Soviet Union—with or without its Pact allies—was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future within one day of the beginning of activity associated with the move to *Full National Defense Readiness* or *Full Combat Readiness*.

#### **Pact Options for Initiating War in Europe—Warning Implications**

24. As Soviet leaders were considering the preparation of Warsaw Pact forces for war with NATO, they would be faced with deciding the location, timing, and size of the initial attack. A major dilemma facing the Soviet leaders would be the degree to which they would care to trade off Pact preparedness and full combat potential called for in their doctrine for a greater degree of strategic surprise which might be granted by a smaller, but more quickly generated attack designed to

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preempt the establishment of an organized defense by NATO. In the evaluation of the risks, benefits, and warning implications of alternative Soviet and Warsaw Pact options for the initial attack, we have defined four Warsaw Pact options. The first, the standing-start attack [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] is included to present a more complete range of Pact capabilities. The other three of these options are selected on the basis of intelligence evidence [REDACTED]

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25. In describing certain of the options, we refer to Warsaw Pact wartime organizations called *fronts*. (See the inset box accompanying paragraph 55 of chapter IV.) In discussing the number of *fronts* for war in Europe, we refer only to those that would be in Central Europe and available for commitment in the initial attack. Warsaw Pact contingency plans for war in Europe envision the establishment of a first echelon of three *fronts* in the Central Region, with additional *fronts* moved forward from the western USSR to form a second echelon. (See figure 3, the foldout map appended to chapter IV.) This concept is reflected clearly in [REDACTED] doctrinal literature, and other documentary evidence. If the USSR should decide on war in Europe, it probably also would begin to activate the wartime structure of *fronts* throughout the USSR.

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#### Option I—The Standing-Start Attack

26. There is no evidence [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] which feature an unprepared, standing-start attack on NATO from a peacetime force posture. The Soviets, however, do have the capability to attack NATO units using ground and air combat forces garrisoned near the inter-German border. As many as 10 to 15 Soviet divisions and perhaps several East German divisions could reach initial combat points and lead or support such an attack in the Central Region in somewhat less than 24 hours. By dint of surprise and local force superiority, Soviet planners would expect—and might get—some early ground and air victories.

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27. These initial successes would likely be the only advantage which would accrue to such an attack, however. The considerations which weigh against initiating a war from a standing start are persuasive, and we judge that there is virtually no chance that the Soviets would initiate a war against NATO with an attack from a standing start. The Soviets would have to expect that the standing-start attack would cause NATO to initiate massive and rapid mobilization, almost simultaneously with the Pact, and the local force superiority which would accrue in such an attack probably could not be maintained if NATO forces reacted effectively. The Soviets, considering their conservative view of NATO rapid mobilization capabilities (discussed in



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paragraph 4 of chapter I), might well conclude that the attacking force could face an *adverse* situation before reinforcements could be committed. The attack would initially have to rely on incomplete lines of communications. The Soviets would not have time to establish a *front-level* command, control, and communications structure or to prepare the Soviet or East European populace or national economies for war—both basic requirements posed in Soviet military literature. Finally, the standing-start attack would leave other Pact strategic and general purpose forces—as well as the national economy—unprepared for expanded hostilities. In particular, the Soviets would be concerned about the threat of NATO escalation to nuclear war.

28 [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The forward movement of an attack force of 10 to 15 divisions would provide many additional indicators to NATO intelligence, which routinely monitors military activity in East Germany.

29. Accordingly, in the extremely unlikely case of an unprovoked attack on NATO from a peacetime posture, we judge that US and Allied intelligence could sense and would report the massive movement [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] within hours of the beginning of preparation. Such activity would provide sufficient intelligence for Allied commanders and decisionmakers to take precautionary steps. Given the extremely unlikely nature of such an event, however, interpretation of this activity would be ambiguous, and a final judgment that an attack was imminent might not be reached before hostilities occurred.

#### Option II—Attack With Two *Fronts*

30. Extensive analysis [REDACTED] leads us to conclude that the smallest force the Pact would use to start theater offensive operations would consist of two *fronts*. This force would be composed essentially of all Soviet ground and tactical air force units in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia together with most of the East German and Czechoslovak units which are active in peacetime—a total of some 40 ground divisions, plus support and tactical air units.

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31. Extensive study of Pact contingency plans and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Pact's theoretical capability to organize, deploy, and prepare forces for war in Europe, indicates that, in the most urgent circumstances, the Pact would need about four days to prepare a two-*front* force. While initiation of an attack with slightly less than four full days of preparation is possible, the complexity and magnitude of the operation and the risks attending insufficient preparation would be

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likely to cause the Soviets to take more than four days to prepare this two-*front* force. These preparations would be made using a compressed buildup procedure which would exacerbate the confusion and disruptions inherent in a transition to a war footing and, at least initially, would yield combat units—and especially combat support units—with less than full capabilities to undertake or sustain combat operations. Preparations which, in a less demanding operation, would be undertaken in a phased or sequential pattern would have to occur simultaneously.

32. By waiting to establish a two-*front* attacking force, the Pact would diminish many of the critical deficiencies of the standing-start attack. Naval capabilities would be substantially improved, and the minimal essentials of the command and control system could be functioning.

33. Still, initiating hostilities after only these minimum preparations were made would entail serious risks for the Pact and would be extremely unlikely except in the most urgent circumstances. The attacking force itself would lack some *front*-level elements and would have to cover the broad sector from the Baltic to Austria. Command and control capabilities, particularly at the theater level, would remain incomplete. Pact mobilization would not have proceeded far enough to ensure immediate followup forces and supplies for the attack in Central Europe and effective participation in the war by major forces in other areas.

34. We are agreed that it is extremely unlikely that the Pact would initiate war from this two-*front* posture in other than an extraordinarily time-urgent circumstance. On this point there are two views. One holds that the only circumstance which would cause the Pact to initiate theaterwide offensive operations against NATO from this posture with only four days of preparation would be the Soviet perception of the threat of imminent NATO attack. Although NATO mobilization would be viewed as a serious threat and would almost certainly cause the Pact to make counterpreparations, the Soviets would be particularly averse to initiating an attack with a force not fully prepared against NATO forces which enjoyed some advantages of prior preparation or mobilization—*unless* threat of imminent NATO attack was clear.<sup>1</sup>

35. The other view holds that the Soviets might choose to attack with the two-*front* force in a variety of urgent contingencies. For example, during a serious East-West political dispute, the NATO countries (particularly the United States and West Germany) might undertake a degree of mobilization and other military preparations to improve their defensive postures and to demonstrate will in support of

<sup>1</sup> The holders of this view are the Central Intelligence Agency and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

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the diplomatic bargaining. The Soviets, of course, might see this as weakening their own bargaining position, in particular by threatening to upset the political advantage afforded them by superiority in forces-in-being in Central Europe. In such a contingency, and if they perceived truly vital interests at risk, the Soviets might set in motion the rapid buildup and early attack option. Their efforts would be intended to preempt NATO defensive and diplomatic preparations, not an immediate threat of NATO attack.<sup>2</sup>

36. Preparation of a two-*front* attack from the normal Pact peacetime posture would almost certainly require declaration of *Full Combat Readiness* and *Full National Defense Readiness*. Even if the alert were accomplished covertly, a host of indicators that a full readiness posture was being taken would be available and would almost certainly be interpreted and conveyed to decisionmakers within one day. Accordingly, US and NATO decisionmakers would almost certainly have three days or more of warning in the case of a rapid Pact attack with two *fronts*.

#### Option III—Attack With Three *Fronts*

37. The third and fourth options are ones in which Soviet planners, under a less urgent need to defend or attack, would elect to bring the Pact to full readiness via a more efficient, phased buildup procedure and to attack when the force available for initial operations totaled three *fronts* (Option III) or five *fronts* (Option IV). The same evidence cited earlier on Pact buildup planning and procedures indicates that, in these circumstances, the Pact would require, at a minimum, about eight days to achieve a three-*front* force.

38. The Pact preference for a larger than two-*front* attack is well supported in Soviet writings  The phased buildup to three *fronts*—a total of some 50 to 60 divisions plus support and tactical air units—would offer a reasonable expectation of an orderly and efficient transition to an attack posture affording force superiority, sustainability, and precautions against the risks of a wider war. In addition, this option would provide opportunity for significantly more naval forces to deploy. Accordingly, we judge that, except in extraordinarily urgent circumstances (as described above in paragraphs 34 and 35), the Pact would prefer to prepare at least a three-*front* force before initiating hostilities. Although these preparations could proceed in a phased, organized manner, they would be massive and would almost certainly be initiated by an alert to *Full Combat Readiness* and *Full National Defense Readiness*. US and NATO decisionmakers

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<sup>2</sup> The holders of this view are the Defense Intelligence Agency; the National Security Agency; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy; and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force.

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would almost certainly have seven days or more of warning in the event of a Pact attack with three *fronts*.

#### Option IV—Attack With Five *Fronts*

39. The Pact might elect to build up even greater forces in Eastern Europe prior to initiating hostilities against NATO, depending on its assessment of the political and military situation at the time. A five-*front* posture—about 90 ground divisions plus support and tactical air units and with additional naval units at sea—would fulfill Soviet conservative doctrinal preferences to the extent possible in practical terms and would take about two weeks to achieve.

40. The pattern of activity involved in developing a full five-*front* attack force in Europe would be similar to that of the three-*front* force, although the pace might be reduced somewhat. We judge that about two weeks would be required to prepare for combat and move from the USSR the two additional *fronts*. Western intelligence would almost certainly be able to sense the change in overall posture even if the first alert to increased readiness were not directly and immediately detected. Therefore, we judge that in the case of a five-*front* attack option, intelligence could provide warning that the Pact was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future, possibly within hours, but certainly within a day or two of the initial order to go to increased readiness. Accordingly, in the case of a full five-*front* attack, US and NATO decisionmakers would have 12 days or so of warning time.

#### Summary Judgments and Relative Likelihood

41. In summary, the following judgments are unanimous within the Intelligence Community and are based on extensive analysis of all-source data. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] on Pact planning, and information related to the generation of military forces in the Central Region.

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- The Pact would begin to organize at least five *fronts* for use in Central Europe from the time of the decision to go to full readiness.
- There is virtually no chance that the Soviets would attack from a standing start.
- The smallest force the Pact would use to begin a theater offensive would consist of two *fronts*, requiring about four days of preparation; except in an extraordinarily time-urgent circumstance, it is extremely unlikely the Pact would initiate war from this posture.

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- The Pact would prefer, before attacking, to prepare at least a three-*front* force, which would require, at a minimum, about eight days of preparation.
- Circumstances permitting, the Pact would build up even greater forces in Eastern Europe before initiating hostilities against NATO.

42. In paragraphs 24 through 40 we have discussed the Soviet perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four options and we have estimated approximate minimum preparation times which would be required before the Pact could launch a coherent attack with a force of a given size. Of course, any Soviet decision on when to attack would be influenced by a set of sometimes contradictory military factors, including the USSR's own level of preparations and its perception of the status of NATO preparations and deployments, the desire to achieve surprise, and the urge to develop fully, in advance, as large a force as possible. We are agreed that the ultimate decision to attack almost certainly would not rest on purely military factors, but rather on a combination of those and political imperatives, the state of diplomatic negotiations, or other considerations.

43. Even though the various analysts within the Community have used the same basic data, different conclusions have been reached concerning the most likely timing of a Pact attack. This is due to differing interpretations of data and judgments about the weighting of the various military and political factors and considerations. One view<sup>3</sup> interprets the data and draws conclusions as follows:

- [REDACTED] two to three *fronts*—which are the forces that the Pact would have available in the forward area in the four-to-eight-day period.
- The Pact has the most favorable force ratio in this same period after beginning preparations for war.
- These factors in the context of Soviet military writings and other sensitive materials, emphasize the importance of surprise.
- Therefore, the four-to-eight-day period is the most likely time for the Pact to attack.

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44. All others believe that it is more likely the Pact would take at least eight days of preparation (assembling three to five *fronts*) before initiating hostilities. In their view:

- The Pact preference for an attack involving more than two *fronts* is well supported in Soviet writings [REDACTED]

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<sup>3</sup> The holder of this view is the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army.

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- There is no agreed system of calculating force ratios, and several methods other than that used to form the preceding view show that greater force ratios occur after eight days of preparation. In any case, force ratios would be only one of the considerations in timing the attack.
- Soviet doctrine calls for force superiority, availability of resupply and reinforcements, full preparation for joint action by all components of the military forces, stability of the rear, and fully effective command and control, and each of these is enhanced with eight days or more of preparation.
- Although the Pact would attempt to achieve both surprise and force superiority, if forced to choose between them the Pact would likely opt for force superiority.
- Soviet military planning is conservative, and the risks the Soviets would associate with potentially inadequate preparation would be high.

#### Gradual Buildup

45. As a modification to any of the options previously discussed, the Soviets, and possibly their Pact allies, could make gradual preparations for war over a longer period. Steps which increase the combat readiness of any elements of their military forces could be taken selectively over an interval of weeks or months. For example, such steps as the mobilization of rear service support elements in the forward area

which would normally be accomplished during a period of *Full Combat Readiness*, could be accomplished incrementally during a period of no alert. Such steps, however, would probably be noted by Western intelligence within days after their implementation and would be interpreted as modifying the Pact peacetime military posture. Such actions might result in reactions of a similar nature by NATO members and would certainly increase Western intelligence efforts. Though these Pact steps might somewhat reduce the time necessary to achieve the full combat readiness of the forces discussed in Options II, III, and IV, they would be taken at the expense of likely greater NATO preparedness and vigilance.

46. Other measures which the USSR alone or in concert with its Pact allies might undertake to carry out gradually could include more time-consuming, but relatively unprovocative, civil and military preparedness steps. These measures would not involve any steps normally associated with the alert to *Full Combat Readiness* and could improve the efficiency of the nation to support a war and the sustainability of the forces but not necessarily the initial combat

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capability of the engaging forces. They would not greatly improve the Soviet and Pact capability to move quickly to a posture of *Full Combat Readiness* because the large-scale and most time-consuming actions that are required in each of the previous options, and which would still be very visible, would remain to be done.

47. Gradual Pact preparations for hostilities, either as a deliberate policy in preparation for some "surprise" action including attack or in a period of political crisis, would present more analytic problems for US intelligence than would the sudden and widespread implementation of war preparations. Although a gradual implementation would provide us more opportunities to detect some of the preparations and more time to validate our information, the early preparations would probably be ambiguous and might be difficult to distinguish from "routine" force improvements or exercises.

48. Because of the high risks and costs involved, the Pact would defer general mobilization, major deployments of combat forces, and other highly visible and provocative measures until the final move to full readiness. We therefore believe that even after some months of preparation, when a final or contingent decision to attack was made, there would still be a discernible difference in the nature, scope, and pace of preparedness measures. This would alert us and enable us to provide warning that the Pact was initiating the final steps that would enable it to go to war in the near future. Accordingly, even after a gradual buildup, we believe we would detect within a day the final moves to full readiness to attack.

49. A period of gradual preparations would improve Pact combat effectiveness and civil preparedness under any of the postulated buildup options. Depending on the number and nature of the measures already taken and the political circumstances, the time required to prepare the attack could also be reduced, perhaps by as much as a day or more. We would, however, already have issued warnings, probably repeatedly, of a growing danger of hostilities.

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## DISCUSSION

### I. LIKELIHOOD OF A NATO-WARSAW PACT WAR

1. The Soviets keep strong military forces of their own in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary in order to maintain their dominant position in that region, to deter Western military action or to fight effectively if deterrence fails, and to maximize their influence upon West European affairs.

2. The danger of war in Europe has long been a major preoccupation of Soviet security policy. Soviet leaders would regard another European war—with the prospects of nuclear escalation—as a major threat to the USSR's existence.

#### A. Soviet Views of Risks in War With NATO

3. In considering a Warsaw Pact<sup>1</sup> initiation of war with NATO in Europe, the Soviets see two principal dangers:

- NATO could put up a stiff defense which might prevent a quick Pact victory and thus gain the time to bring into play the greater manpower and industrial reserves of the West.
- The war could go nuclear with unpredictable consequences; the end result might be a massive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union.

In addition, Moscow might well see a risk in depending on its Pact allies to fight loyally and effectively.

4. Soviet planners would anticipate a quick, strong NATO reaction to any attack. Soviet reporting on NATO's military capabilities indicates clearly that the Soviets have good data on NATO's order of battle, alert procedures, readiness categories, and mobilization times and that they interpret this information in a prudent, conservative manner. For example, a 1974

<sup>1</sup> The Warsaw Pact is a political-military alliance composed of the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.

classified Soviet assessment ascribed to NATO the capability to:

- Deploy covering ground units to forward areas within six hours.
- Deploy first-echelon ground units for combat within one and a half to two days.
- Launch 80 percent of tactical aircraft within three to three and a half hours.
- Deploy naval combat units to sea within four hours.
- Launch almost 10 percent of tactical nuclear missiles within five minutes.
- Emplace some nuclear mine barriers within two and a half hours and the remainder within 11 hours.
- Complete the air deployment to Europe from the United States of two divisions in three days.

These Soviet estimates assumed no prior NATO alert. The Soviets assumed shorter times if NATO were in a posture of increased readiness. Another assessment indicated Soviet belief that NATO—with French participation, which the Pact cannot prudently discount—could field in Central Europe more than 35 division equivalents in five days and some 50 divisions in 30 days. Other Soviet assessments confirm this picture of a prudent, sometimes exaggerated, appreciation of NATO capabilities.

5. The Soviets would also be influenced by their perception of NATO's long-term potential and of its good prospects for external help. The Soviets are aware that Sweden would fear a Warsaw Pact victory and could complicate Pact problems on the northern flank and that Spain too has potential for supporting NATO operations. The Soviets probably see most non-European nations as favoring the Western cause and believe that some of them would likely join NATO in a protracted war. Moscow must also recognize, moreover, that most of those few states that might



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welcome a Pact victory would be constrained by NATO's control of the seas and of trade.

6. Moscow fears that if it were engaged in a protracted conflict in the west, Peking might take the opportunity to strike in the east. We think there is little danger of a Chinese attack on the USSR, but the Soviets, perhaps again as a matter of prudence, rate the danger higher than do we.

7. The second great deterrent for the Soviets is their realization that nuclear operations could start at any time after hostilities began and could quickly spread without limit.

Moscow assumes that NATO would use nuclear weapons to avoid defeat and that escalation may not be controlled short of a full-scale exchange of strategic weapons. The mere existence of the separately controlled British and French strategic nuclear systems compounds the Soviets' uncertainty about their ability to control nuclear escalation. Publicity about US consideration of limited nuclear options, the West's continued refusal to accept Soviet no-first-use proposals, and the Soviets' expressed concern with what they perceive as Western, especially US, unpredictability convince us that the Soviets would be most unwilling to start a conflict with NATO unless they had accepted the risks of both theater and strategic nuclear war.

8. Doubts that its allies would fight loyally and effectively would further constrain Moscow's planning for aggressive war. The Soviets know that, if given a free choice, few East Europeans would support them in such a war. Moscow would rely on political and military controls and on propaganda—particularly anti-German propaganda—but we cannot say how effective Moscow believes these measures might be.

9. The Soviets would recognize great risk in initiating a war alone in the expectation of dragging the East Europeans in after them. They must depend on their allies in a NATO-Pact war because of Central European geography and the interdependent Pact force structure. The Soviets would have to mount the attack from East European territory, and they probably could not depend upon unwarned and unprepared allies to commence and carry out immediately and effectively the tasks necessary to augment and sustain the offensive. More than half the Pact divisions and aircraft now in Central Europe are East European, and they have been assigned combat roles in the initial stages of conflict. Furthermore, the lines

of communication from the USSR all run through East European countries, and these countries are largely responsible for operating and servicing the land transport systems and for provision of critical air and rear area defenses.

## B. Chances of War in Present Circumstances

10. In light of Soviet views of the risks of a NATO-Pact war, we believe it highly unlikely that the Soviets would decide deliberately to attack NATO in the present circumstances. It is also unlikely that the Soviet leaders believe that NATO wants war or would seek it as a deliberate policy. War in Europe would become likely only as a result of a profound change in the political, military, or economic situation. Changes in the military balance and alterations in each side's perceptions of the other's strengths and weaknesses could, of course, affect the way the Soviets would calculate the potential gains and risks in a crisis. A significant weakening of NATO's military potential would encourage the Soviets to think they could exercise more influence in Western Europe and might tempt Moscow into using pressure tactics. But changes in the military balance would not likely lead to war so long as the Soviets perceived that their losses would be heavy and that the risk to the Soviet homeland would be high.

11. We believe that a war in Europe would be preceded by a period of extreme tension in a crisis of unprecedented severity. The Soviets show

that they too anticipate such a period of tension. In view of the above-cited dangers of a war with NATO, the Soviets would pursue a protracted search for an alternative solution. Only when a crisis reached a point where they saw their vital interests directly threatened would the Soviets entertain the possibility of starting a war with NATO.

12. In a period of extreme tension where neither side wants war, there are likely to be moves and countermoves in which cause and effect become ambiguous, with each side believing that time and the course of events are working against it. There is a great deal of uncertainty in predicting Soviet behavior in such a situation. We think it is highly unlikely that the Soviets would allow minor hostile incidents to evolve into open hostilities in the absence of a deliberate decision to go to war. We believe, however, that any Soviet decision to go to war is likely to be preceded by some sequence of events involving

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escalations on both sides and miscalculations in crisis management.

13. We do not believe that changes in the Soviet leadership in the foreseeable future will have any marked effect on the probability of a NATO-Pact war. Differences of view, personally or institutionally motivated, exist in the Politburo and, no doubt, will continue to exist, but these differences are not likely to upset the stability of the system.

## II. SOVIET MILITARY OBJECTIVES IN A WAR WITH NATO

14. [REDACTED] indicate clearly that the principal objective of Pact military operations against NATO would be a rapid and total victory in Central Europe. We consider it extremely unlikely that the Soviets would deliberately attack with limited force to achieve limited objectives, either as a first step in going to war with NATO or to obtain the upper hand in a crisis while attempting to avoid war.

### A. Limited Operations for Limited Objectives

15. [REDACTED] the Soviets could, in a crisis, undertake military operations in Europe on a limited scale to seize quickly a strategically important territory or city. The theoretical objectives of such an operation could be either to serve as an initial step in going to war or to settle the crisis on Soviet terms while avoiding large-scale war with NATO.

16. We see no advantage to the Soviets in beginning a large-scale war with a limited-objective attack. By definition, the limited-objective attack would have little or no military value in destroying or interrupting development of NATO's combat potential. It would, in fact, completely sacrifice strategic surprise and ensure that NATO mobilization would not far lag that of the Pact.

17. As a device to secure an important political objective (for example, control of West Berlin or Hamburg) while attempting to avoid war with NATO, a limited-objective attack would have serious flaws in the Soviet view. The Soviets would attempt to present the United States, West Germany, or NATO with a military *fait accompli* by seizing the objective quickly, with a minimum of resistance, while mobiliz-

ing Pact forces. They then would seek a negotiated settlement while deterring further military action through the threat of theater war with a fully prepared Pact force.

18. The Soviets' perceptions of NATO forces and doctrine and their concept of the overall "correlation of forces" show that they would see the risks of a limited-objective attack as far outweighing the short-range gains. Accordingly, we judge there is virtually no chance that they would initiate an attack to obtain limited objectives in the present military, political, and economic situation. The most serious risk would be the expansion of armed resistance and its escalation to general war. The Soviets could not be confident that tactical nuclear weapons would not be used in response to a sudden limited-objective attack. The grave consequences of miscalculation and first use of nuclear weapons in response to such an attack, however slight the chances, would seem to far outweigh the potential gains.

19. Even in the absence of war, such an action would signal the end of the era of "peaceful coexistence" and would inevitably throw NATO into serious preparations for war in Europe. Given their own conservative view of NATO's great mobilization capabilities in the short run, and the prospect of activating NATO's much greater industrial, manpower, and economic potential in the longer run, the Soviets could perceive an increasingly adverse balance of forces in Europe as NATO rose to the task of confronting what would be considered an extremely serious Soviet threat.

20. Soviet leaders could not be confident that a limited-objective attack could succeed quickly. They are aware that an attack to seize control of West Berlin, for example, would be complicated, bitterly opposed by Western forces in the city, and likely to escalate to a broader war. Likewise, the occupation of major urban centers near the inter-German border, such as Hamburg, would require major deployment of Soviet forces to the area to overcome the NATO forces garrisoned there. In either case, protracted resistance would inevitably cause the Soviets to increase the weight of their attack and the attendant destruction of their objective, thus increasing the chances that the war would spread. The risks perceived by the Soviets of beginning a war with NATO without the force-wide military preparations they deem necessary to sustain the attack and to guard against escalation are discussed in chapter IV, on "How the Pact Would Go to War," beginning at paragraph 39.

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**B. Total Victory—The Basic Soviet Objective**

21. If the Soviets decided to go to war with NATO, for whatever reason, it is highly likely that their principal military objective would be the rapid defeat of all NATO forces in Central Europe. Whether France became an objective would depend on the course of the campaign and the part the French played in it. The requirement to rapidly engage and destroy all NATO combat formations in Central Europe and to occupy NATO territory is driven by the Soviets' high regard for NATO's greater war potential. In the Soviet view, only through a broad, rapid offensive campaign could the USSR hope to interrupt or prevent NATO from developing equal or, possibly in the longer run, greater combat potential in Europe. Soviet military writings [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] operations designed to achieve such a rapid, total victory over NATO forces.

**C. Possible Pact Theaters of Military Operations in Europe**

22. Soviet strategists have identified at least three theaters of military operations (TVDs) in which they envisage potential land conflicts with NATO. (See figure 1.) These theaters are described below, together with brief characterizations of the types of military operations that the Soviets appear to envisage for each. Pact planning is sufficiently flexible to allow for variations in any of these elements, and exercises frequently rehearse such variations.

**23. Northwestern TVD. Information [REDACTED]**

[REDACTED] indicates that the Soviets envisage a Northwestern TVD that would be based on the Leningrad Military District and encompass the Scandinavian Peninsula. This information implies the existence of contingency plans for the defense of the Murmansk and White Sea areas, including Northern Fleet installations, for neutralizing or seizing the lightly defended NATO facilities in northern Norway, and for deploying for a defense in depth of the Norwegian Sea. The Soviets' large Northern Fleet would also be used to restrict NATO movements north of the Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom gap and against NATO naval forces and merchant shipping in the North Atlantic where possible.

24. **Western TVD.** The Western TVD would include East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia on the Pact side and West Germany, the Benelux nations, Denmark, and France on the NATO side. The bulk of

both NATO and Pact theater forces are either in Central Europe or earmarked for use there. The Soviet Baltic Fleet and the Polish and East German Navies would likely be used in attempts to gain control of the Baltic Sea, to support amphibious operations in the Western TVD, and to secure passage to the open ocean.

25. **Southwestern TVD.** Soviet planners envision military operations against Greece and Turkey, and probably northern Italy and Austria. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] operations against Greece and Turkey would be launched from Bulgaria and the Odessa region of the USSR to secure the Turkish Straits and support naval operations in the eastern Mediterranean. Operations against northern Italy intended to secure the southern flank of the Western TVD might be launched from Hungary through Yugoslavia or Austria. The Soviet Black Sea Fleet (including the air component) and the much smaller Bulgarian and Romanian Navies could support operations aimed at securing the straits and neutralizing NATO naval forces in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

26. Operations against eastern Turkey, on the other hand, would be far from certain. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Moscow might well prefer merely to maintain a presence there sufficient to tie down Turkish forces without weakening the principal efforts elsewhere.

27. The Soviet Navy's *Eskadra*<sup>2</sup> in the Mediterranean would be employed primarily against the NATO carriers and ballistic missile submarines there because of the threat they pose. Soviet land-based strike aircraft would be similarly employed. The Soviets probably would attempt to destroy these carriers and submarines with conventional weapons at the outset of hostilities, and would use nuclear weapons for the purpose once nuclear warfare began. Any protracted or extensive naval campaign would be beyond Soviet capabilities, however, because of inadequate logistics and poor local air support. NATO land-based air forces that could be brought to bear over the sea, as well as NATO navies, would be a significant tactical threat to the *Eskadra* and to its essential lines of communications through the Turkish Straits, even if these were under Soviet military occupation.

<sup>2</sup> This Russian word would normally be translated as "squadron." The Soviet naval force in the Mediterranean is larger than a US squadron, however, and more nearly equates to a numbered US fleet in size and in variety of ships.

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*Possible Warsaw Pact Theaters of Military Operations (TVDs) in Europe*

Figure 1



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28. Although a crisis leading to war could develop as easily on one of NATO's flanks as in the center (perhaps even more easily on the southern flank), the Soviets would expect Central Europe to be the decisive area of a large-scale conflict. It is the European locus of power for both alliances and encompasses military, political, and economic entities that the Soviets would have to dominate or destroy to achieve victory. We believe that the Warsaw Pact has the means to conduct limited offensive operations in the Northwestern and Southwestern TVDs while simultaneously launching a full-scale offensive against the NATO center, and it might do so in hope of both helping Soviet naval operations and diverting NATO ground and air forces from the decisive theater. In any case, however, the Soviets would not launch flank offensives before having made full preparations for hostilities in Central Europe.

#### D. Activities in Other Areas

29. If the Pact were preparing for war with NATO, the Soviets would also prepare for conflict in the Far East with Chinese, US, or Japanese forces. On the mainland, Soviet theater forces would be prepared for the possibility that China might take advantage of a war in Europe and attack Soviet forces. In the Pacific, the Soviets would prepare for action against US naval and air forces. During a period of tension or crisis we would expect intensified surveillance and the initiation of certain preparatory measures by ground, sea, and air forces, such as the movement of ships to sea to enhance their survivability as well as to position them for possible war.

30. The small number of Soviet naval units deployed in distant areas, such as the Caribbean Sea or the Indian Ocean, probably have contingency missions in the event of a NATO-Pact war. These units probably would be prepared to engage Western naval forces with conventional or nuclear weapons. Because of the limited size and capabilities of the Soviet naval forces, they would be extremely vulnerable to counterattack. If they were able to carry out their tasks and survive, they probably would try to join other Soviet naval forces or—if they could be resupplied—to disrupt Western shipping.

### III. WARSAW PACT DOCTRINE AND READINESS

#### A. Doctrine

31. The key elements of Soviet doctrine which affect how the USSR might initiate war in Europe

include the principles of force superiority, combined arms, surprise, the stability of the rear, and offensive initiative.

32. Soviet doctrine emphasizes the need for heavy superiority in the main battle areas, with strong reserves—of supplies as well as forces—to ensure the momentum of the attack. Concentration of force is, of course, a fundamental principle for all armies, but the concept has exceptional impact in Russian military thinking and practice. Its continuing importance to Soviet planning is demonstrated not only by doctrinal statements, but also by Pact peacetime dispositions, by exercises, and by the size of the forces fielded for the intervention in Czechoslovakia.

33. Another tenet of Soviet doctrine, closely associated with that of force superiority, is joint action by all components of the military forces. Each component of the military establishment is considered to have a role—if only a contingent one—in any major operation. Preparations by the ground and tactical air elements, for example, would be paralleled by readiness preparations in naval and strategic attack and defense forces even if these forces were not required to participate directly in the contemplated action. Such preparations would be extremely important in the Soviet view since there would always be the risk of nuclear war in any large-scale hostilities.

34. Soviet doctrine also stresses achieving surprise in order to improve the effectiveness of either tactical or strategic military operations. Although surprise can, of course, be obtained through ruse or unexpected tactics, Soviet planners recognize that there is usually a tradeoff between force superiority and surprise, as when the chances of surprise are improved by limiting force size, or the size of the force is increased at the risk of lessening surprise. In general, the Soviets will make every effort to achieve both. If forced to choose between them, they would likely opt for force superiority. Superiority in forces is real and affords advantages that are certain; surprise is a less tangible advantage and always runs some risk of being compromised, with results that can be counter-productive.

35. Apart from the purely military aspects of Soviet doctrine, there is a longstanding insistence on the importance of the economy, morale, and political stability of the nation in times of war. If circumstances permitted, Moscow would institute special administrative and security measures and propaganda campaigns to ready the people and the public institutions for conflict as a prelude to any military venture. If there

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were no time, or if surprise were considered essential, such measures would be taken concurrently with the opening of hostilities. The Soviets view morale—not only of the troops but also of the general population—as highly important, if not essential, to armed struggle. They put almost equal stress on the effective functioning of the political and economic institutions. The “stability of the rear” was given first place in Stalin’s “permanently operating factors of war,” and, though his words are no longer used, modern Soviet military theorists emphasize the same thought.

36. Soviet strategy for war in Europe centers on the doctrine of seizing and holding the strategic initiative through prompt offensive action by all forces. Pact [REDACTED] primary emphasis on early launch of a large-scale offensive to destroy the main NATO forces and to seize at the least West Germany, the Benelux nations, and Denmark in a campaign lasting less than a month. Although these [REDACTED] address the contingencies of an actual or threatened NATO attack, the concept would apply equally well to an unprovoked Soviet attack. In this case, the shock and suddenness of the Pact offensive would be intended to prevent NATO forces from preparing for a counteroffensive or establishing a fixed defensive line which might force the Pact into prolonged positional warfare and provide NATO time to develop its full wartime potential.

#### B. Warsaw Pact Readiness

37. The principle of the strategic initiative is also consistent with Pact efforts to maintain capabilities for rapid mobilization and emergency deployment. During peacetime the Pact countries maintain large theater and strategic forces at varying levels of readiness. Details on the readiness of selected elements of the Warsaw Pact armed forces are contained in the annex. The basic structure and most elements of the entire theater force intended for early wartime use are in being, although usually not at full strength. Most Soviet strategic offensive forces are maintained at lower levels of readiness than their US counterparts. The Soviets apparently believe that a period of increased tension, called the *Period of Threat* in Soviet usage, will precede any major use of military forces. The peacetime readiness status of Pact forces reflects the Soviets’ heavy reliance on the warning that they believe such a period would provide, and their recognition of the political and economic cost of maintaining continuously a high readiness posture. It is clear from force organization, deployment, and readiness that Moscow does expect to have some time

for preparations before hostilities begin. The Soviets also recognize, however, that an enemy might be capable of drastically reducing the duration of this period of tension.

38. Each Pact nation has a dual alert and callup system. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] One part of the system, called the *National Defense Readiness Plan* (or *System*), deals with the mobilization readiness of the national administration and economy, including the mobilization of reserve manpower and civilian equipment for military duty. The other part is the Pact-wide *System of Combat Readiness*, which sets forth readiness, alert, and mobilization requirements and procedures for the active armed forces. In combination, these mechanisms provide the control and coordination necessary to change a country and its armed forces from a peacetime status to a war footing. The table appended to this chapter outlines the various alert and readiness levels and the interrelationship between the two parts of the system.

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## IV. HOW THE PACT WOULD GO TO WAR

### A. Response to Crisis

39. Because of the deterrents to war described in paragraphs 3 through 13 of chapter I, we judge that, from the beginning of any crisis, the Soviets would make a major and protracted effort to resolve the outstanding issue peacefully. They would attempt diplomatic initiatives, both public and private, might use pressure tactics or threats, and would prefer any means other than war which offered a chance for an acceptable solution.

40. Indeed, we believe that hostilities would more likely follow from an escalating political crisis than from an unprovoked decision to resort to war. Diplomatic efforts in a serious crisis would be hampered by mutual distrust of and possibly by misreading of motives, leading to demonstrative or precautionary military preparations and thereby increasing the chances of further miscalculation and escalation.

41. This and the following sections in this Estimate discuss Pact options for initiating war with NATO from its present political, economic, and military posture. If, over a period of many months or several years, relations between the Western and Warsaw Pact nations deteriorated badly, the political, eco-

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## Warsaw Pact Alert and Callup System

Situation and Method of Implementation	National Defense Readiness Levels	Armed Forces Readiness Levels <sup>a</sup>
<i>Peacetime</i>	In <i>Constant National Defense Readiness</i> the national administration and the economy satisfy routine armed forces requirements and create the necessary conditions, such as stockpiles of equipment, for a rapid mobilization.	In <i>Constant Combat Readiness</i> the armed forces are not on alert and are conducting normal peacetime training.
<i>Period of Threat</i>	At <i>Increased National Defense Readiness</i> the nation fulfills tasks that are primarily of an organizational nature and that produce as little disruption as possible in the national economy. Limited organizational changes in the government and civilian administrations occur. Equipment and supplies held in national reserves, together with limited numbers of reservists, vehicles, and equipment, may be called up from the national economy. Movement of all transport with mobilization assignments is restricted.	At <i>Increased Combat Readiness</i> , units are placed on alert and take preparatory measures in anticipation of the declaration of <i>Full Combat Readiness</i> . Depending on the political and military situation, all military forces within a country, or one branch of service, one military district, or even one tactical formation, may be placed on <i>Increased Combat Readiness</i> . A few of the measures taken are: —Command staffs and operations groups <sup>b</sup> alerted. —Communications/command posts readied. —Operations plans reviewed/modified. —Security measures increased. —Troops recalled to barracks and prepared to deploy. —Units prepared to receive reservists. —Selected callups begun. —Selected unit deployment may be made.

The nation as a whole and the armed forces maintain *Constant National Defense Readiness* and *Constant Combat Readiness* respectively. (These are standard Warsaw Pact terms designating the peacetime posture.) Selected elements can be ordered to higher readiness levels to exercise the system or to deal with problems not associated with the international situation.

*Period of Threat*

Increased international tension would initiate an evaluation of the situation by the national leadership. Even before the evaluation had resulted in a decision, a few national and armed forces activities—in particular, intelligence and reconnaissance—could be ordered increased on a selective basis. When the national leadership determines that a significant threat exists, preparatory measures are taken by elements within the nation having mobilization or wartime assignments to increase national readiness to convert rapidly to a war footing. In the case of an immediate and obviously severe threat to the nation, preparations may be directed immediately toward fully mobilizing the economy, the armed forces, and the territorial, border, and civil defense forces. During a period of gradually increasing or fluctuating tension, preparations may be subdivided into a number of phases designed to ensure the availability of forces appropriate for dealing with each stage of the developing situation, while at the same time avoiding unnecessary disruption of the nation. Although the actual number of phases used would probably vary with the particular crisis, the preparations generally fall into two subdivisions of the overall *Period of Threat*.

—The first subdivision, called *Increased Readiness*, is characterized by various measures intended to assure the ability of various components to mobilize rapidly if required and to increase the likely efficiency of the components once mobilized. *Increased National Defense Readiness* for the nation and *Increased Combat Readiness* for the armed forces are ordered either immediately for all components or on a more selective and gradual basis. Preparations may be covert and may include calling selected elements to *Full Readiness*. The duration of the period of *Increased Readiness* is determined more by the nature of the crisis than by the time necessary to complete the preparatory measures.

Footnotes at end of table.

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## Warsaw Pact Alert and Callup System (Continued)

Situation and Method of Implementation	National Defense Readiness Levels	Armed Forces Readiness Levels <sup>a</sup>
—The second subdivision— <i>Full Readiness</i> —is characterized by measures which produce a definite transition to a war footing. <i>Full National Defense Readiness</i> for the nation and <i>Full Combat Readiness</i> for the armed forces would be ordered immediately if the country were under immediate threat of attack. Because of the likely confusion and inefficiency of a hurried mobilization, Pact countries would prefer, if time were available, to mobilize in a more phased and orderly manner. Also the Pact callup system provides for selective mobilization.	At <i>Full National Defense Readiness</i> government ministries and state administrative organs assume their full wartime organizations and provide services and support to the armed forces. Reservists and equipment from the national economy have mobilized into the armed forces, and industry is converted to the production of war materials.	<i>Full Combat Readiness</i> is the highest armed forces readiness level. Full mobilization is ordered and the forces prepare to undertake combat missions immediately or to deploy under combat alert conditions. All forces are intended to achieve <i>Full Combat Readiness</i> before the outbreak of fighting, although, in the case of a defense against an immediate attack, this may not be possible. A few of the measures taken are: —Wartime command structure activated. —Units filled out with reservists. —Forces deployed, ready to execute war plans. —Nuclear warheads released from storage to user units.

<sup>a</sup> There are only three readiness levels for the armed forces. There are, however, varying numbers of readiness conditions for weapon systems.

<sup>b</sup> In Soviet terminology, an operations group is a group of officers sent by the staffs of major field forces (or formations) of the services to lead a particular grouping of troops (or forces). This group has the means of command, control, and communications and is responsible for maintaining close coordination with these various staffs of major field forces.

conomic, and military posture of both alliances could be expected to change. If this were to occur, the judgments in this Estimate—drawn against the present political, economic, and military environment—might no longer be valid.

42. Nonetheless, the contingencies we discuss in this Estimate could possibly derive from a short, severe crisis developing from an extraordinary event, such as a confrontation over Berlin, Yugoslavia, the Middle East, or a strategic nuclear accident.

### B. The Process of Preparing for War

43. For purposes of discussing how the Pact would go to war, we have categorized expected activities into four processes: deciding to go to war; internal political preparation; civil and economic preparation; and military preparation.

#### Deciding To Go to War

44. Given the present structure of Soviet political and military leadership, the decision to prepare for or initiate war with NATO would necessarily be made by the full Politburo and almost certainly with the recommendation of the Defense Council. (See figure 2.) Unless the reason for going to war were obvious to the principal Politburo members, the decision would be a contentious and probably protracted process. We judge it unlikely that the Soviets could perceive a clear cause or provocation that would not be obvious to the

West as well. Security surrounding such grave deliberations would be extraordinary, but the decision process would almost certainly involve scores of high-level political and military officers. The initial decision probably would establish the intent to prepare for or initiate an attack on NATO and the degree of urgency required. It almost certainly would not establish the date and time of attack or irrevocably commit the Soviets to attack. The final decision to attack might not be made until a few hours before its execution.

45. We cannot judge to what extent the counsel of East European leaders would be sought in the initial decisionmaking process, but the anticipated reactions of the principal Warsaw Pact allies would almost certainly weigh heavily in the decision. Sooner or later, the commitment of principal East European political and military leaders would almost certainly be required because their support would be critical in the execution of a war with NATO.

#### Political Preparation

46. A major concern of the Soviet leadership would be to guarantee the support and stability of the population and public institutions in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Representations to the regional leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union would probably be made, and a large-scale propaganda program to motivate the Soviet populace to support the decision to go to war would be

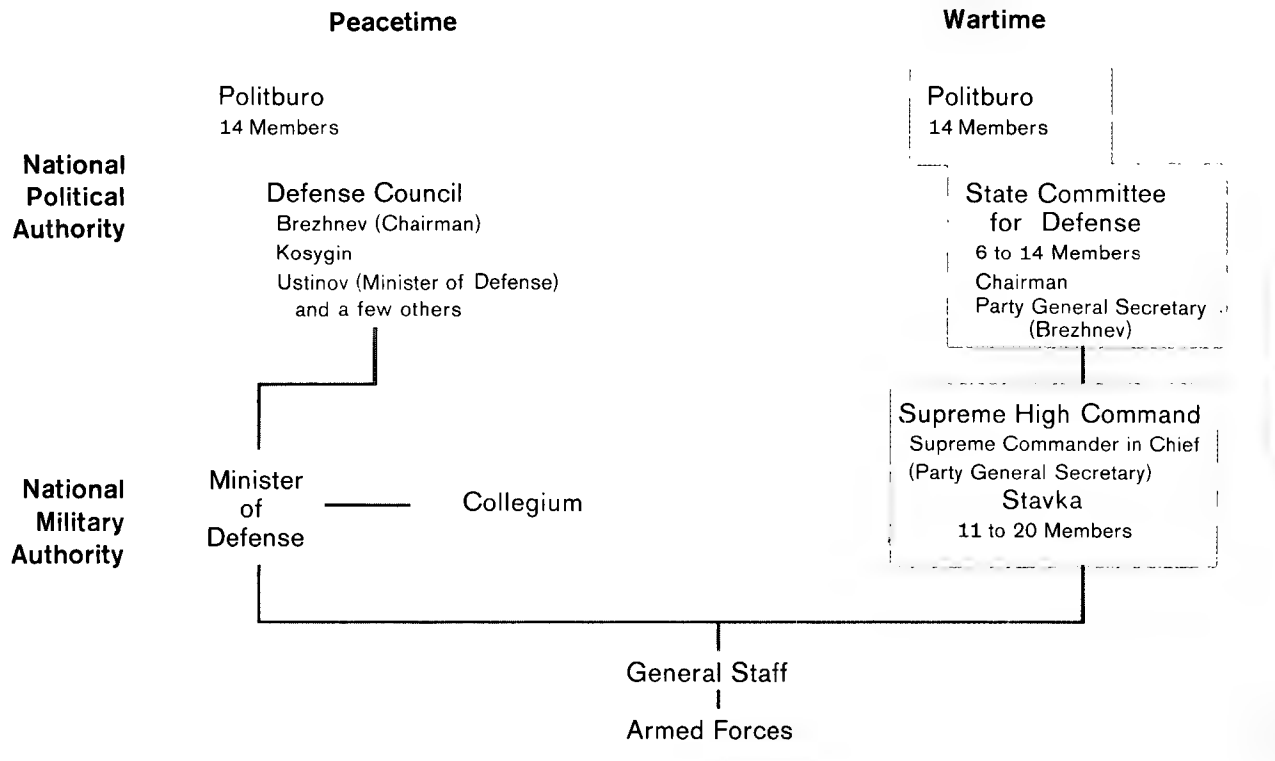


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**Soviet Command Authorities**

Figure 2



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This figure depicts those Soviet command activities which almost certainly would be involved in the decision to prepare for war. Such deliberations would also likely involve scores of other high-level political and military officers who would provide staff support for the principals.

planned or initiated. The more critical problem, in the Soviet view, would be the elicitation of support and maintenance of firm political control of the populace and public institutions of the principal East European allies.

47. Firm representations would almost certainly be made to the principal political and military leaders of the East European allies, and massive propaganda campaigns would likely be orchestrated. Steps to suppress and control potential dissident movements would almost certainly be taken. Circumstances permitting, the Soviets might undertake weeks or months of such activity to ensure a coherent response from the East European populace. In the case of a sudden attack from a peacetime posture, the Soviets would have to accept the risks of uncertain East European political backing for their action, although they might hope to enforce cooperation from the outset if necessary and establish firm political support during the initial stage of hostilities through control of information and a "clear" call to war.

#### Preparation of National Economies

48. In preparing to initiate hostilities with NATO, the Soviets could not be certain whether the prospective war would be short or long, nuclear or nonnuclear, and as a matter of prudence would have to consider full civil and economic preparations from the start. As a crisis deepened and the chances of war increased, the Soviets almost certainly would take some steps to prepare the nation for war. Such preparations would continue at an accelerated pace when a state of *Increased National Defense Readiness* was declared. (This state is described in the table appended to chapter III.)

49. The process of putting industrial and agricultural systems on a full war footing, whether begun before or after a war started, would be both disruptive and visible and would take weeks or months to work out, even with wholly adequate planning. Many of the measures would have to be implemented promptly. For example, military control over the transportation

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facilities would have to be established early. Considerable time—probably weeks—would be required to reroute and organize rolling stock to support the movement and logistics support for the forces in the field and the changed economic priorities. Likewise, establishment of military control of critical commodities could not be delayed.

50. Civil defense preparations would certainly have to be integrated with the political and economic plans and would be considered in the early stages of a crisis. Some preliminary steps might also be taken, such as preparations to relocate leaders and to make shelters ready. Other more drastic steps, such as selective evacuation of cities, would begin, if at all, only in a period of full preparation for war.

#### Military Procedures

51. The way in which the Pact modified its military posture during a crisis would depend largely on the speed, urgency, and intensity with which the crisis developed:

- In a slowly developing crisis the Pact countries might move to institute *Increased Combat Readiness* (as defined in the above-cited table). In such a condition a wide variety of measures might be undertaken, but these would fall far short of placing the Pact on a full war footing. The process need not be continuous; rather there probably would be periods of holding at interim levels.
- Once the Soviets had determined that the likelihood of war was high, the Pact's final preparations would be initiated by a decision to go to *Full Combat Readiness* (as defined in the table). This decision could occur with or without the preexistence of a state of increased readiness. After that decision, preparations for war would move rapidly and continuously.

52. Warsaw Pact contingency planning identifies two basic approaches to achieving *Full Combat Readiness*:

- The phased approach, to be undertaken while the Pact still envisaged a chance of avoiding hostilities, would be to move toward a war footing in a deliberate and orderly manner, bringing various force elements to full readiness sequentially.
- The compressed approach, which would be undertaken either after the unanticipated out-

break of hostilities or when the Soviets deemed war both unavoidable and imminent, would entail readying all forces simultaneously and as rapidly as possible. The compressed approach would create forces for commitment to combat more quickly, but would exacerbate the confusion and disruptions inherent in a transition to a war footing and would yield combat units—and especially combat support units—with less than full capabilities, at least initially, to undertake or sustain combat operations. In the compressed approach, unlike the phased approach, there would be no expectation and little possibility of modulating the transition process.

#### C. Attack Options

53. As Soviet leaders were considering the preparation of Warsaw Pact forces for war with NATO, they would be faced with deciding the location, timing, and size of the initial attack on NATO. This decision would be made against the background of those factors discussed in the preceding sections of the Estimate: Soviet planned military objectives; doctrine and plans for readying the military forces, populations, and economies of the Warsaw Pact for war; and Soviet perceptions of NATO capabilities. The major dilemma facing the Soviet leaders would be the degree to which they would care to trade off Pact preparedness and full combat potential called for in their doctrine, for a greater degree of strategic surprise which might be granted by a smaller, but quicker attack designed to preempt the establishment of an organized defense by NATO.

54. In the following evaluation of the risks and benefits of alternative Soviet and Warsaw Pact options for the initial attack, we have defined four Warsaw Pact options. The first, the standing-start attack, is included to present a more complete range of Pact capabilities. The other three of these options are selected on the basis of evidence

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55. In describing certain of the options, we refer to Warsaw Pact wartime organizations called *fronts*. (See the accompanying inset box.) In discussing the number of *fronts* for war in Europe, we refer only to those that would be in Central Europe and available for commitment in the initial attack. Warsaw Pact contingency plans for war in Europe envision the establishment of a first echelon of three *fronts* in the Central Region with additional *fronts* moved forward

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from the western USSR to form a second echelon. (See figure 3, the foldout map appended to chapter IV.) This concept is reflected clearly in [redacted]

[redacted] doctrinal literature, and other documentary evidence. If the USSR should decide on war in Europe, it probably also would begin to activate the wartime structure of *fronts* throughout the USSR. This could include a *front* in each peripheral military district of the USSR from the Norwegian border to the Soviet Far East.

#### A *Front* in the Warsaw Pact

In the Pact concept, a *front* would be a combined-arms force usually consisting of three to five field armies—each numbering three to five tank or motorized rifle divisions; an air army of some 600 tactical aircraft; and those naval elements necessary to accomplish the mission of the *front*. The ground forces of the *front* also include numerous separate combat and combat-support elements such as tank, artillery, missile, and air defense units. A large service-support element numbering about 100,000 men would provide the *front* with transport, maintenance, engineering, supply, and medical support, as well as resupply of items ranging from ammunition to fuel and missiles. The *front* itself would total about 400,000 men after full mobilization. Although not directly comparable to any Western organization, the *front* would be similar to the NATO army group in size, level of command, and function.

56. Further, we believe that, in all of the options described below, the Soviets would envisage the use of forces from the western USSR as reinforcements against the NATO center and would begin to organize at least five *fronts* for use in Central Europe from the time of the decision to go to full readiness. Three *fronts* would be formed from Soviet and East European forces already in Central Europe and two or more would be formed from forces based in the Carpathian, Belorussian, and Baltic Military Districts.

#### Option I—The Standing-Start Attack

57. There is no evidence of [redacted]

[redacted] an unprepared, standing-start attack on NATO from peacetime force posture. The Soviets, however, do have the capability to attack NATO units using ground and air combat forces garrisoned near the inter-German border.

58. As the means of initiating a large-scale war with NATO, the standing start would, by definition, grant the advantages of tactical surprise. As many as 10 to 15 Soviet divisions and perhaps several East German divisions could reach initial combat points and lead or support such an attack in the Central Region in somewhat less than 24 hours. By dint of surprise and local force superiority, Soviet planners would expect—and might get—some early ground and air victories.

59. These initial successes would likely be the only advantage which would accrue to such an attack, however. The considerations which weigh against initiating a war from a standing start include:

- **Loss of Mobilization Advantage.** The Soviets would have to expect that the standing-start attack would cause NATO to initiate massive and rapid mobilization, almost simultaneously with the Pact. The local force superiority created by such an attack probably could not be maintained if NATO forces responded effectively. The Soviets, considering their conservative view of NATO rapid mobilization capabilities (discussed in paragraph 4 of chapter I), might well conclude that the attacking forces could face an *adverse* situation before reinforcements could be committed.
- **Rear Service Support.** Because Soviet and East European nondivisional rear service units are normally manned at far below planned wartime strength (see the section of the annex beginning with paragraph 15), the standing-start attack would initially have to rely on incomplete lines of communication. If Pact mobilization of rear service support were inefficient, interdicted, or otherwise delayed, the operation would face a high risk of failure. At the outset, the movement of reinforcement units would be competing directly with resupply requirements for the capacity of an unprepared national transport system.
- **Command, Control, and Communications.** The Soviets would not have time to establish a *front*-level command, control, and communications structure until at least several days after the attack was launched.
- **Political and Economic Preparation.** The standing-start attack would not allow for preparation of the Soviet or East European populace or national economies for war—a basic requirement posed in Soviet military literature.

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- **Vulnerability and Risk of Escalation.** The standing-start attack would leave other Pact strategic and general purpose forces—as well as the national economy—unprepared for expanded hostilities. In particular, the Soviets would be concerned about the threat of NATO escalation to nuclear war.

60. These arguments lead us to conclude that there is virtually no chance that the Soviets would initiate a war against NATO with an attack from a standing start.

#### Option II—Attack With Two Fronts

61. Extensive analysis [redacted] leads us to conclude that the smallest force the Pact would use to start theater offensive operations would consist of two *fronts*. This force would be composed essentially of all Soviet ground and tactical air force units in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia together with most of the East German and Czechoslovak units which are active in peacetime—a total of some 40 ground divisions, plus support and tactical air units. (See figure 3, the foldout map.) While organizing the initial two-*front* force, the Soviets and their allies could begin preparations of other general purpose and strategic forces and their national economies for general war and for the risks of nuclear escalation.

62. Extensive study of Pact contingency plans and [redacted] the Pact's theoretical capability to organize, deploy, and prepare forces for war in Europe, indicates that, in the most urgent circumstance, the Pact would need about four days to prepare a two-*front* force. While initiation of an attack with slightly less than four full days of preparation is possible, the complexity and magnitude of the operation and the risks attending insufficient preparation would be likely to cause the Soviets to take more than four days to prepare this two-*front* force. These preparations would be made using a compressed buildup procedure which would exacerbate the confusion and disruptions inherent in a transition to a war footing and would, at least initially, yield combat units—and especially combat support units—with less than full capabilities to undertake or sustain combat operations. Preparations which, in a less demanding operation, would be undertaken in a phased or sequential pattern would have to occur simultaneously. Before attacking, the Pact would probably:

- Call for a state of *Full National Defense Readiness* for all Pact nations.

- Call for a state of *Full Combat Readiness* for all Pact forces.
- Mobilize, assemble, move, and prepare for combat the attacking force—a multinational force of more than 750,000 men and some 250,000 major items of equipment, some of which would move over 200 kilometers to their initial combat positions.
- Bring most of the Pact's tactical aviation to a readiness posture that would enable it to sustain large-scale offensive operations in Central Europe from the outbreak of war.
- Set up at least minimal national systems of logistics, particularly supply lines, that could provide some reinforcement and resupply to the attacking forces.
- Deploy and set up a command and control system that would enable Moscow to control adequately a two-*front* offensive in Central Europe. The system would include at least some links to supporting strategic commands and to forces in other areas.
- Bring land-based strategic offensive and defensive forces to full readiness and deploy them as necessary to support the initial offensive, to defend Pact homelands against air attack, and to hedge against the possibility of rapid escalation to a massive strategic nuclear exchange.
- Ready and send to sea as many warships as possible (about half of the Soviet major surface combatants and about 60 percent of their attack submarines) to prevent their being attacked in home ports and to enable them to perform their assigned roles on the flanks and in direct support of the Central European offensive (as described in paragraphs 23 through 27 of chapter II).
- Begin civil defense preparations.

63. By waiting to establish a two-*front* attacking force, the Pact would diminish many of the critical deficiencies of the standing-start attack. Naval capabilities would be substantially improved and the minimal essentials of the command and control system could be functioning. This attack option would give NATO only a few days to organize. Although we estimate that Pact war planners would expect to achieve higher force ratios by delaying hostilities further, the suddenness of the onset could be expected to provide major advantages by inducing disorder and reducing NATO time to prepare. The rudiments of the supply system could support at least early success.

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64. Still, initiating hostilities after only these minimum preparations were made would entail serious risks for the Pact and would be extremely unlikely except in the most urgent circumstances. The attacking force itself would lack some *front*-level elements and initial combat effectiveness would be less than could be achieved with further force development and organization. Because the northern *front*, made up mainly of Polish divisions which require extensive mobilization to prepare for combat, would not yet be available, the Soviet and East German forces would have to cover this area. Command and control capabilities, particularly at the theater level, would remain incomplete. Pact mobilization would not have proceeded far enough to ensure immediate followup forces and supplies for the attack in Central Europe and effective participation in the war by major forces in other areas. In particular, early opportunities for coordinated naval actions or ground and air offensives on the flanks would be limited.

65. We are agreed that it is extremely unlikely that the Pact would initiate war from this two-*front* posture in other than an extraordinarily time-urgent circumstance. On this point there are two views. One holds that the only circumstance which would cause the Pact to initiate theaterwide offensive operations against NATO from this posture with only four days of preparation would be the Soviet perception of the threat of imminent NATO attack. Although NATO mobilization would be viewed as a serious threat and would almost certainly cause the Pact to make counterpreparations, the Soviets would be particularly averse to initiating an attack with a force not fully prepared against NATO forces which enjoyed some advantages of prior preparation or mobilization—*unless* threat of imminent NATO attack was clear.<sup>3</sup>

66. The other view holds that the Soviets might choose to attack with the two-*front* force in a variety of urgent contingencies. For example, during a serious East-West political dispute, the NATO countries (particularly the United States and West Germany) might undertake a degree of mobilization and other military preparations to improve their defensive postures and to demonstrate will in support of the diplomatic bargaining. The Soviets, of course, might see this as weakening their own bargaining position, in particular by threatening to upset the political advantage afforded them by superiority in forces-in-being in Central Europe. In such a contingency, and if

<sup>3</sup> The holders of this view are the Central Intelligence Agency and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

they perceived truly vital interests at risk, the Soviets might set in motion the rapid buildup and early attack option. Their efforts would be intended to preempt NATO defensive and diplomatic preparations and not an immediate threat of NATO attack.<sup>4</sup>

#### Option III—Attack With Three *Fronts*

67. The third and fourth options are ones in which Soviet planners, under a less urgent need to defend or attack, would elect to bring the Pact to full readiness via a more efficient, phased buildup procedure and to attack only when the force available for initial operations totaled three *fronts* (Option III) or five *fronts* (Option IV). The same evidence cited earlier on Pact buildup planning and procedures indicates that, in these circumstances, the Pact would require, at a minimum, about eight days to achieve the three-*front* force.

68. The more complete national and military preparations permitted under Option III would aim at ensuring a larger and better prepared force for the attack on NATO, more efficient joint action by all forces, more effective maintenance of the attack, and added preparation for contingencies of possible nuclear war. In this option:

- Those ground forces readied for offensive operations would consist of most of the Pact units garrisoned in peacetime in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, including all forces in the two-*front* grouping described above with the addition of Polish forces and some additional Czechoslovak units. A total of some 50 to 60 ground force divisions.
- Pact tactical aviation could deploy forward and adequately prepare additional aircraft, perhaps including some from the western USSR, and would improve its overall capabilities to mount and sustain large-scale offensive air operations in Central Europe.
- A more extensive Pact command and control system would be established at the *front*, theater, and national levels. Communications capacity would be increased, and redundant channels would be developed to guard against disruption.
- The readiness of Pact civil and military defenses to withstand NATO counterattacks would be

<sup>4</sup> The holders of this view are the Defense Intelligence Agency; the National Security Agency; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy; and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force.

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improved, as would the transition of the economy to a war footing.

- Additional Soviet ballistic missile submarines could be readied and deployed, thus furthering the preparations for nuclear war.
- Naval forces could reach wartime operating areas in much greater numbers for operations on the flanks, in support of the Central European offensive, and in more distant areas.
- Preparation of ground forces would continue throughout the Warsaw Pact, and they would develop a capability to undertake early offensive operations on the flanks, while Pact tactical air capabilities for supporting flank operations would substantially increase.

69. The Pact preference for an attack involving more than two *fronts* is well supported in Soviet writings. There is evidence that Pact planners would want at least three *fronts* available for initial operations in Central Europe, with assurance of at least one additional *front* for reinforcement within a week of the initiation of hostilities. This option also fits better than do the early-attack scenarios with Soviet doctrinal preferences for force superiority, national preparation, joint-forces operations, and conservative threat interpretation. The phased buildup used would offer a reasonable expectation of an orderly and efficient transition to an attack posture affording force superiority, sustainability, and precautions against the risks of a wider war. This attack option would provide time for an additional 15 to 20 percent of the Soviet Navy to deploy. In about a week the Soviets could probably put about two-thirds of their major naval combatants and attack submarines to sea in order to execute the plans indicated in paragraphs 23 through 27 of chapter II. Accordingly, we judge that except in extraordinarily urgent circumstances (as described in paragraphs 65 and 66, above) the Pact would prefer to prepare at least a three-*front* force prior to initiating hostilities.

#### Option IV—Attack With Five *Fronts*

70. Circumstances permitting, the Pact would build up even greater forces in Eastern Europe before initiating hostilities against NATO. A five-*front* posture would fulfill Soviet conservative doctrinal preferences to the extent possible in practical terms and would take about two weeks to achieve. In this option:

- The array of Soviet ground and tactical air forces in the three western military districts of the

USSR constitutes the principal grouping of forces apparently intended for early reinforcement of Pact forces in Central Europe. Such additional forces (about 30 divisions—probably organized into at least two additional *fronts*) would undoubtedly add to the momentum and sustainability of a Pact attack. The ground forces available in the European Theater could total some 90 ground divisions. (See figure 3, the foldout map.)

- Even further general purpose naval, strategic, and national defense preparations could be undertaken prior to Pact attack. The increase in Pact strength could be continuous, and the Pact would maintain its capability to attack at any time.

71. This attack option would, of course, afford minimal opportunity for surprise, while maximizing the weight of the attack. This option would also increase the ratio of Soviet to non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces in the theater of operations. In this option, the longer and phased buildup would offer the greatest expectation of an orderly and efficient transition to an attack posture, the greatest sustainability, and most complete command, control, and communications network, and it would allow the national transportation systems to concentrate on resupply with reinforcements already in place.

#### Summary Judgments and Relative Likelihood

72. In summary, the following judgments are unanimous within the Intelligence Community and are based on extensive analysis of all-source data,

on Pact planning, and information related to the generation of military forces in the Central Region.

- The Pact would begin to organize at least five *fronts* for use in Central Europe from the time of the decision to go to full readiness.
- There is virtually no chance that the Soviets would attack from a standing start.
- The smallest force the Pact would use to begin a theater offensive would consist of two *fronts*, requiring about four days of preparation; except in an extraordinarily time-urgent circumstance, it is extremely unlikely the Pact would initiate war from this posture.
- The Pact would prefer to prepare at least a three-*front* force before attacking, and the

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preparation would require, at a minimum, about eight days.

- Circumstances permitting, the Pact would build up even greater forces in Eastern Europe before initiating hostilities against NATO.

73. In paragraphs 57 through 71 we have discussed the Soviet perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four options and we have estimated approximate minimum preparation times which would be required before the Pact could launch a coherent attack with a force of a given size. Of course, any Soviet decision on when to attack would be influenced by a set of sometimes contradictory military factors, including the USSR's own level of preparations and its perception of the status of NATO preparations and deployments, the desire to achieve surprise, and the urge to develop fully, in advance, as large a force as possible. We are agreed that the ultimate decision to attack almost certainly would not rest on purely military factors, but rather on a combination of those and political imperatives, the state of diplomatic negotiations, or other considerations.

74. Even though the various analysts within the Community have used the same basic data, different conclusions have been reached concerning the most likely timing of a Pact attack. This is due to differing interpretations of data and judgments about the weighting of the various military and political factors and considerations. One view<sup>5</sup> interprets the data and draws conclusions as follows:

- [REDACTED] two to three *fronts*, which are the forces that the Pact would have available in the forward area in the four-to-eight-day period.
- The Pact has the most favorable force ratio in this same period after beginning preparations for war.
- These factors, in the context of Soviet military writings and other sensitive materials, emphasize the importance of surprise.
- Therefore, the four-to-eight-day period is the most likely time for the Pact to attack.

75. All others believe that it is more likely the Pact would take at least eight days of preparation

<sup>5</sup> The holder of this view is the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army.

(assembling three to five *fronts*) before initiating hostilities. In their view:

- The Pact preference for an attack involving more than two *fronts* is well supported in Soviet writings [REDACTED]
- There is no agreed system of calculating force ratios, and several methods other than that used to form the preceding view show that greater force ratios occur after eight days of preparation. In any case, force ratios would be only one of the considerations in timing the attack.
- Soviet doctrine calls for force superiority, availability of resupply and reinforcements, full preparation for joint action by all components of the military forces, stability of the rear, and fully effective command and control, and each of these is enhanced with eight days or more of preparation.
- Although the Pact would attempt to achieve both surprise and force superiority, if forced to choose between them the Pact would likely opt for force superiority.
- Soviet military planning is conservative, and the risks the Soviets would associate with potentially inadequate preparation would be high.

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#### D. Gradual Buildup

76. As a modification to any of the options previously discussed, the Soviets, and possibly the Pact allies, could make gradual preparations for war over an extended period. There are many changes in their economic, political, and military posture that the Soviets can make gradually or piecemeal in response to a crisis. Steps which increase the combat readiness of any elements of their military forces could be taken selectively over an interval of weeks or months. For example, such steps as the mobilization of rear service support elements in the forward area [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] which would normally be accomplished during a period of *Full Combat Readiness*, could be accomplished incrementally during a period of no alert. Such steps, however, would probably be noted by Western intelligence within days after their implementation and would be interpreted as modifying the Pact peacetime military posture. Such actions might result in reactions of a similar nature by NATO members and would certainly increase NATO intelligence efforts. Though these Pact steps might some-

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what reduce the time necessary to achieve the full combat readiness of the forces discussed in Options II, III, and IV, they would be taken at the expense of likely greater NATO preparedness and vigilance.

77. Other measures which the USSR alone or in concert with its Pact allies might undertake to carry out gradually could include more time-consuming but relatively unprovocative civil and military preparedness steps. These measures would not involve any steps normally associated with the alert to *Full Combat Readiness*. They could entail selected steps achieved normally during a period of increased readiness. The following are illustrative of such measures:

78. These kinds of steps can improve the efficiency of the nation to support a war and the sustainability of the forces but not necessarily the initial combat capability of the engaging forces. They would not greatly improve the Soviet and Pact capability to move quickly to a posture of *Full Combat Readiness* because the large-scale and most time-consuming actions that are required in each of the previous options, and which would still be very visible, would remain to be carried out.

79. There is an added danger for the USSR in attempting a covert buildup for attack in a period of calm. At some point in the preparations it would be necessary to include the other Pact countries, and this would greatly increase the risks of compromise. The

East Europeans would not easily be persuaded to cooperate unless they understood and accepted the reasons for the Soviet intention to initiate war. In any multinational dialogue on so critical a matter, leaks of information would be likely. And, if the Soviets did not bring the other Pact nations in on their plans, the buildup would not improve the greater part of the Pact military force which is the least combat ready. In this case, the USSR would incur the same risks of attacking without preparing the Pact countries—as it would in the standing-start attack.

## V. WARNING OF WAR

### A. Definition of Warning

80. Ideally, intelligence warning of imminent hostilities would have all of the following characteristics:

- Describe preparations that a potential enemy was taking and state that these steps, if continued, would enable it to go to war after a specific time in the near future (hours, days, weeks, months).
- Relate these preparations to the course of crisis-related events and conclude that the likelihood of war in the near future had increased.
- Give specific details concerning the potential enemy's plan for the time, place, manner, and strength of the initial attack.
- Convey the information convincingly to national decisionmakers in a clear, timely, and well-documented form.

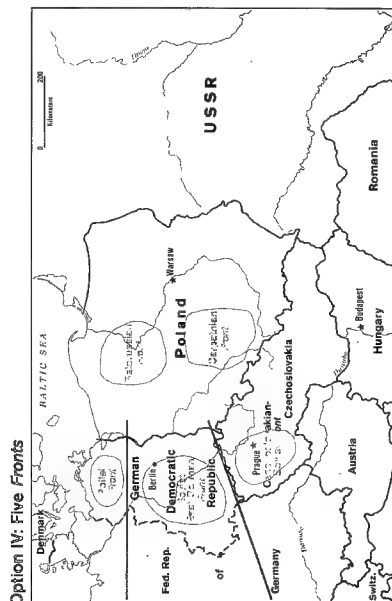
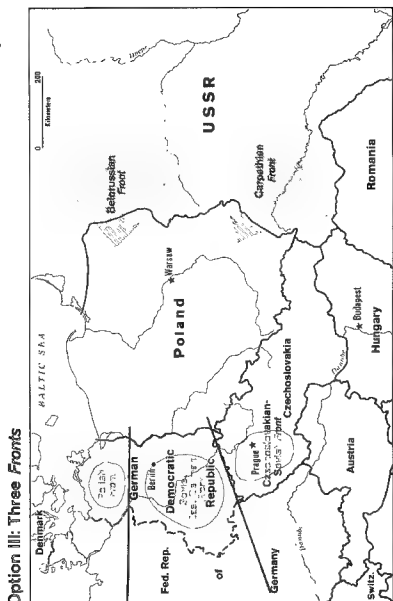
81. For the purposes of this Estimate, we define warning as *an intelligence judgment clearly conveyed to national decisionmakers that the Warsaw Pact is taking steps to enable it to go to war in the near future and that the course of events has increased the likelihood of war in Europe.*<sup>6</sup> This degree of warning, although it does not incorporate all of the elements of ideal warning, could be provided to national decisionmakers relatively rapidly and would provide an adequate basis for decisions concerning appropriate counterpreparations and other courses of action. We are unlikely to be able to be more definitive than this in our initial warning and foretell when the enemy will attack, where he will attack, or

<sup>6</sup> This definition of warning is similar to the definition of *strategic warning* provided in JCS Publication 1, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 3 September 1974, which is: "A notification that enemy-initiated hostilities may be imminent. This notification may be received from minutes to hours, to days, or longer prior to the initiation of hostilities."



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Figure 3

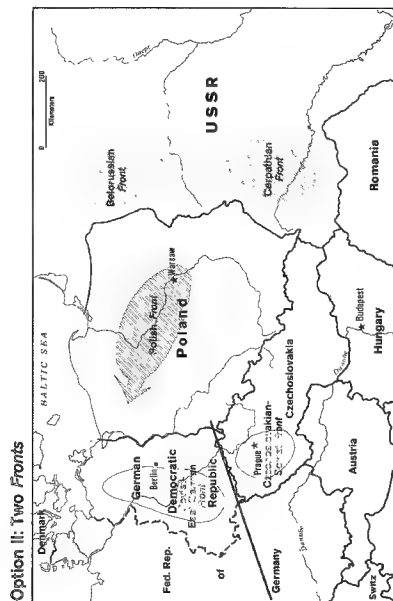


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# *Warsaw Pact Options for Initial Attack Force in the Central Region*



The smallest force the Pact might use to start theater offensive operations probably would consist of two fronts—a total of some 40 ground divisions plus support and tactical air units. In the most urgent circumstances, the Pact would have to be able to launch an attack on NATO forces in the Central Region within 10 to 15 days. The complexity of the operation and the risks attending insufficient preparation would likely cause the Soviets to take more than four days to prepare this force.

Establishment of a five-front posture some 80 to 90 ground divisions—before initiating an offensive against NATO forces in the Central Region—would require some 10 to 15 weeks to achieve.

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whether he will attack at all. The perceived pattern of activity on which the initial warning would be based is likely to be consistent with Soviet intentions other than a planned attack on NATO: such as preparations to defend, take a stiffer stand, achieve a better bargaining position in the crisis, or take action in a different theater. Certain key military activities, such as: the pattern of movement of ground force units to initial combat positions, may allow us to predict the likely scope, location, and timing of the attack. This type of continuing attack assessment would be the major concern of intelligence following the initial warning that the Pact was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future, but is not considered in this Estimate.<sup>7</sup>

### B. Warning Indicators<sup>8</sup>

82. The following judgments on our ability to sense that the Warsaw Pact is taking steps to enable it to go to war in the near future derive from our ability to monitor, on a near-real-time basis, the normal pattern of Soviet and East European civilian and military activity in peacetime. Our confidence in sensing Pact preparation for war is based on our judgment that significant early changes would almost certainly be initiated in a wide range of civilian and military activities as the Pact assumed a posture which would enable it to start a war.

#### Indicators of the Decision

83. The earliest indicators that the Soviet Union was taking steps which would enable it to initiate war in Europe would be potentially available as the Soviets were making the decision to undertake them. Because of the extraordinary security which would surround such discussions, however, there is little likelihood that direct evidence of a Soviet decision to prepare for war would be available before clear evidence of its execution. Indications that an important decision was being considered could be apparent at the time, however.

84. Because we judge it extremely unlikely that the Soviet Union would initiate an attack on NATO without the volunteered, elicited, or enforced coopera-

<sup>7</sup> The *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines *attack assessment* as follows: "An evaluation of information to determine the potential or actual nature and objectives of an attack for the purpose of providing information for timely decisions."

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed listing of warning indicators of war preparations in Europe, see USIB-D-28.6/6, *USIB General Indicator List for USSR/Warsaw Pact Countries*. 11 June 1974 (Top Secret

tion of its East European allies, indications that critical Pact decisions were being taken (including the possible decision to go to war) could be observed in a variety of activities throughout the Warsaw Pact countries. These could include:

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85. Such activities are not likely to be interpreted by Western intelligence analysts as clear indications of Pact intent to prepare for war. They would, however, raise US and NATO awareness of possible imminent Pact activity of some kind, and increase the likelihood that indications of actual preparations would be interpreted quickly.

86. Strong signals that the USSR or the Pact was considering whether to prepare for or to initiate war could, of course, be reported to one of the NATO intelligence services directly from one of the Pact principals or staff members involved in the decision process.

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#### Indicators of Political Preparations

87. Eliciting and enforcing the support of the Soviet and East European population for a major attack on NATO could not be accomplished in a low-key manner. A clear statement of the grave threat to the Pact nations and tightened internal political security controls are likely to precede or accompany large-scale war preparations. Clear indications that the Pact leadership was taking steps to ensure the political

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stability of the Warsaw Pact nations, including the Soviet Union, would likely include:

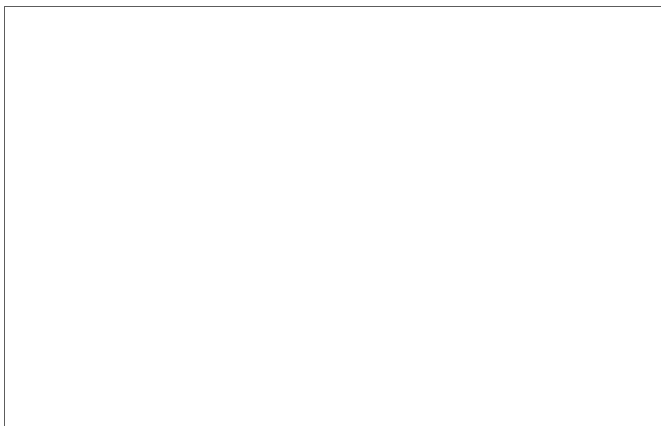


As a crisis deepened, or if the Soviets and their Pact allies decided to initiate war soon, the stridency of their official statements and propaganda would likely increase markedly and they would begin widespread arrests of potential dissidents in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

#### Indicators of Civil and Economic Preparations

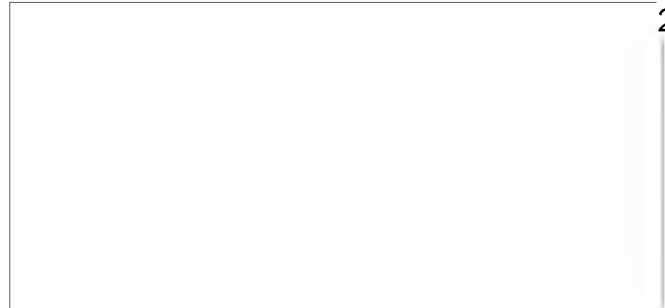
88. The transition of the national economies of the Pact to a wartime posture would, in general, involve: (1) civil defense, (2) increasing production of war materiel, (3) controlling critical commodities, and (4) organizing transportation systems to support military activity. There is little question that such activities would occur as the Pact countries prepared for war, although their timing in relationship to military preparations is difficult to predict.

89. If Pact preparations for war were protracted, civil and economic activities could provide early indicators of Pact intent. These could include:

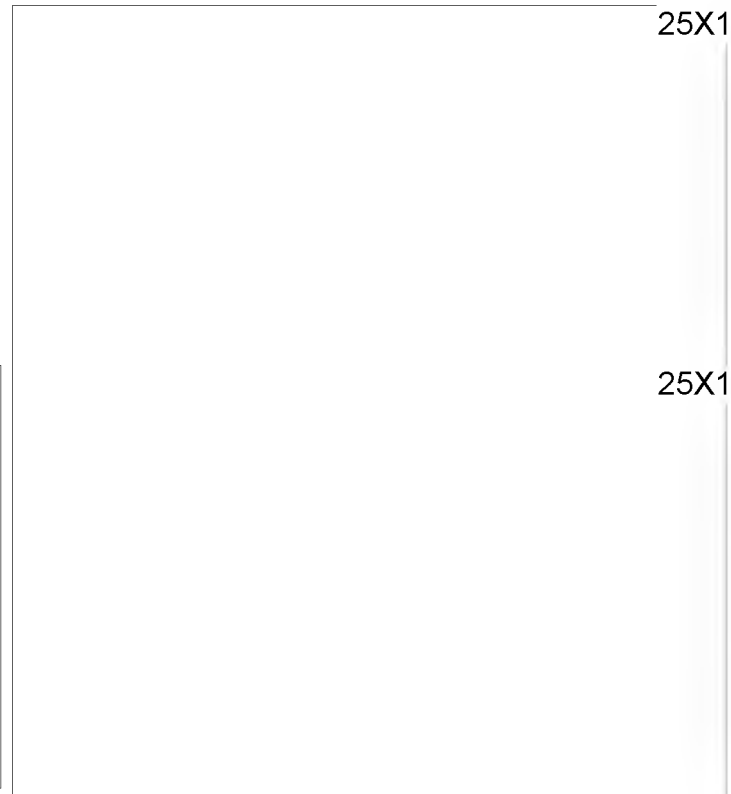


90. Soviet doctrine anticipates that a critical step in preparing the populace and national economy for war is the declaration of a state of *Increased National Defense Readiness*. The declaration, even if not published, would be widely communicated throughout the Soviet Union and would, in itself, be a firm indication that the Soviets were preparing for the contingency of war. Actions associated with a state of

*Increased National Defense Readiness* would probably include:



91. Similarly, declaration of a state of *Full National Defense Readiness*, even if not published, would be widely communicated and would, in itself, clearly signal the serious Soviet (or Pact) intent to prepare for war. The declaration and associated measures would be impossible to mask. Indicators associated with a state of *Full National Defense Readiness* probably would include such activities as:



#### Indicators of Military Preparations

92. As discussed in chapter III of this Estimate, the military forces of the Soviet Union and its Pact allies are maintained in a peacetime posture which keeps only selected forces in a relatively high state of readiness, and a large military unit structure which can be rapidly mobilized to generate large forces to

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deter aggression or to undertake major offensive operations.

93. The Pact nations consider this posture to be a state of *Constant Combat Readiness*. A key step in beginning the process of preparing military forces for the contingency of war is declaration of a state of *Increased Combat Readiness*. Indicators of preparatory measures necessary to achieve this level of readiness include:

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### C. Security, Concealment, and Deception

94. As the Pact moved from a posture of increased readiness to one of full readiness, a much more visible series of activities would occur, including:

95. The Warsaw Pact nations, and particularly the Soviets, have the capability and the experience to employ many techniques of security, concealment, and deception that could affect our ability to detect or correctly interpret some indicators of their preparations for war.

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### Stringent Security

96. The first line of Soviet defense against detection of military preparations would be rigid security. This would be attempted through a multitude of means, including: restriction of planning to a minimum number of people, total control of the press and other media, rigid counterintelligence and political controls on the populace and members of the armed forces, denial of travel by foreigners (and most citizens as

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well) in areas of military activity, conduct of troop movements and other observable preparations

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to the particular political and military situation in which they are to be employed. This would weigh against elaborate use of concealment and deception in hastily prepared attacks. Attacks prepared with greater deliberation over a longer period of time would offer greater opportunities for concealment and deception.

99. Once the Pact had made a decision that war is inevitable, it would sanction at least selective interference with our intelligence collection. This could include space-based systems. The USSR has a variety of capabilities, ranging from selective jamming of military communications links to outright destruction of intelligence satellites. While such interference would degrade Western intelligence, it would, in itself, constitute a strong warning indicator.<sup>9</sup>

#### D. Detection Time

100. We are, in any case, confident of the ability of US and Allied intelligence to detect and correctly interpret a great number of indicators which would be given if the Pact were to prepare for a large-scale war with NATO. In general, this confidence is based on:

#### Concealment and Deception

98. The Soviets would expect that NATO would be alerted in a crisis, and they could not hope to hide all their military preparations for war. Therefore, their best chance for deceiving NATO, if they were preparing for hostilities, would be to mislead NATO as to the scope and purpose of the preparations. They could institute the following political and military deception, propaganda, and misinformation tactics:

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101. We are confident that we could inform decisionmakers that the Soviet Union—with or without its Pact allies—was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future within one day of the beginning of activity associated with the move to *Full National Defense Readiness* and *Full Combat Readiness*.

To be effective, concealment and deception operations must be carefully and extensively planned and tailored

<sup>9</sup> See NI IIM 77-001J, "Prospects for Soviet Interference With US Space Systems During Crisis or Conflict," January 1977.

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102. Further, we are reasonably confident that we would warn of Pact actions to achieve a state of *Increased National Defense Readiness* or *Increased Combat Readiness* within a day.

### E. Warning Time

103. Warning time—the period between warning of Pact preparations for war and initiation of hostilities—would, of course, vary according to the timing and sequence of key Pact preparations.

#### Option I

104. A Soviet standing-start attack from a peacetime posture would be designed to provide as little warning to NATO as possible. In considering such an attack, the Soviets, we assume, would forgo political preparation and a period of increased readiness which might alert NATO. Nonetheless, the Soviets could not prepare the attacking force for this initial assault without calling most of the groups of Soviet forces in Europe to a state of *Full Combat Readiness*. Minimal preparation and movement of 15 or so Pact divisions to attack positions on the inter-German border would probably require somewhat less than 24 hours. In addition, the Soviets would certainly not risk initiating war without first bringing their strategic nuclear forces to a status of *Full Combat Readiness*.

105.

106. The forward movement of an attack force of some 15 divisions would provide many additional indicators to NATO intelligence which routinely monitors military activity in East Germany. This massive movement would be difficult, if not impossible, to mask as an exercise for long.

107. Accordingly, in the extremely unlikely case of an unprovoked attack on NATO from a peacetime posture, we judge that US and Allied intelligence could sense and would report the massive movement

within hours of the beginning of preparation. Such activity would provide sufficient intelligence for Allied commanders and decisionmakers to take precautionary steps. Because of the extremely unlikely nature of such an event, however, interpretation of this activity would be ambiguous and a final judgment that an attack was imminent might not be reached before hostilities occurred.

#### Option II

108. Preparation of a two-front attack from the normal Pact peacetime posture would almost certainly require declaration of *Full Combat Readiness* and *Full National Defense Readiness*.

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Moreover, the Soviet Union and its Pact allies would likely take steps to ensure political stability at least in the East European Pact countries. Even if the alert were accomplished covertly, a host of indicators that a full readiness posture was being taken would be available and would almost certainly be interpreted and warning conveyed to decisionmakers within one day. We have concluded (chapter IV, paragraph 62) that the Pact would require about four days to prepare for the two-front attack; thus US and NATO decisionmakers would almost certainly have three days or more of warning.

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#### Option III

109. Available evidence on Pact plans to prepare for a three-front offensive against NATO indicates that the Pact would plan on about eight days of preparation at a minimum before initiating the attack. Although these preparations could proceed in a phased, organized manner, they would be massive and would almost certainly be initiated by an alert to *Full Combat Readiness* and *Full National Defense Readiness*. Propaganda broadcasts would probably be an orchestrated part of the preparation process.

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110. Even though these preparations would be undertaken using a phased-buildup approach, they would, if accomplished in eight days, constitute a prodigious logistics effort. From a peacetime posture of some 950,000 active ground force troops in the Central Region, the Pact would have mobilized some 600,000 men, brought some 30 understrength or cadre divisions to full strength, moved the some 56 divisions to initial combat positions, prepared them for combat, set up wartime command and control networks, and established logistics lines of communications.

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111.

the simultaneous widespread activities which the Pact military would necessarily be

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undertaking would raise many alarms in the US and Allied intelligence networks that the Pact was vigorously taking steps to prepare for war. A judgment that this was the case could be provided national decisionmakers within a day of the Pact alert to full readiness status. Accordingly, US and Allied decisionmakers would almost certainly have at least seven days of decision and preparation time preceding a full Pact attack with three *fronts*.

#### Option IV

112. The pattern of activity involved in developing a full five-*front* attack force in Europe would be similar to that of the three-*front* force, although the pace might be reduced somewhat. We judge that about two weeks would be required to alert, fill out by mobilization, transport to the East European theater, and prepare for combat the combat and support elements that would make up the two additional *fronts*.

113. To achieve a full five-*front* posture in the minimum time, the Pact would have to initiate the preparation process by declaring *Full National Defense Readiness* and *Full Combat Readiness*.

With two weeks to prepare, however, the Pact would have greater opportunities to mask its intentions in the earliest stages of preparation. Nonetheless, Western intelligence would almost certainly be able to sense the change in overall posture.

Therefore, we judge that in the case of a five-*front* attack option, intelligence could provide warning that the Pact was taking steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future, possibly within hours, but certainly within a day or two of the initial order to go to increased readiness. Accordingly, US and NATO decisionmakers would have 12 days or so of warning time.

#### F. Effects on Warning of a Gradual Buildup

114. Gradual Pact preparations for hostilities, either as a deliberate policy in preparation for some surprise action including attack, or in a period of political crisis, would present more analytic problems for US intelligence than would the sudden and widespread implementation of war preparations. Although a gradual implementation would provide us more opportunities to detect some of the preparations and

more time to validate our information, the early preparations would probably be ambiguous and might be difficult to distinguish from routine force improvements or exercises. Such incremental preparations would provide the Soviets opportunities for concealment and deception, but the effectiveness of such measures would decrease in proportion to their scale.

115. In a period of political crisis we would be expecting the USSR and its Pact allies to undertake some readiness measures, and both the collection and analytic elements of the Western community would be alerted to recognize and report promptly any unusual activity. In these circumstances the Pact might refrain from hiding some preparations in order to signal its resolve and determination. It might, in fact, undertake some fairly overt alerting and mobilization of units, as well as civil defense and other civilian preparations. In this case, which might involve a crisis of some weeks or months, we would almost certainly issue a series of preliminary warnings that the Pact was taking steps to improve its readiness for hostilities, but we would also be able to judge that final preparations (that is, a general imposition of *Full Combat Readiness* and the deployment of large combat forces) had not yet been undertaken.

116. If the crisis continued and both sides took a number of preparedness measures in an action-reaction situation, the dangers of war as a result of escalation or miscalculation would clearly be increasing. It would be particularly difficult in these circumstances for intelligence to judge whether Pact preparations were essentially defensive against a fear of NATO attack or were being made for possible offensive operations. We would, however, be able to judge that the Pact was improving its capability to initiate hostilities on short notice.

117. Because of the high risks and costs involved, the Pact would defer general mobilization, major deployments of combat forces, and other highly visible and provocative measures until the final move to full readiness. We therefore believe that even after some months of preparation, when a final or contingent decision to attack was made, there would still be a discernible difference in the nature, scope, and pace of preparedness measures which would alert us and enable us to provide warning that the Pact was initiating the final steps which would enable it to go to war in the near future. Accordingly, even with a gradual buildup, we believe we would detect within a day the final move to full readiness to attack.

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118. A period of gradual preparations would improve Pact combat effectiveness and civil preparedness under any of the postulated buildup options. Depending on the number and nature of the measures already taken and the political circumstances, the time

required to prepare the attack could also be reduced, perhaps by as much as a day or more. We would, however, already have issued warnings, probably repeatedly, of a growing danger of hostilities.



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## ANNEX

## MILITARY READINESS

1. The intent of this annex is to provide additional background information on the readiness of various components of Pact forces. It begins by briefly discussing the strategic forces, both offensive and defensive. It then discusses, in more detail, the theater forces—ground, air, and naval. It does not make an overall estimate of how long the Pact forces would take to prepare wartime operations.

## A. Strategic Forces

2. Despite the emphasis the Soviets give in their military writings to the requirement for high combat readiness, their strategic forces are not normally maintained at high levels of readiness. This posture probably is the result of policy decisions based on a number of considerations. Chief among these is a belief that a period of increased tension will precede conflict. Other factors probably include confidence on the part of the Soviets in their early warning capabilities, the survivability of some of their offensive systems, the rapidity with which some strategic forces can achieve full readiness, and an appreciation of the costs that high combat readiness entails.

## Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Force

3. We believe that in peacetime the Soviet ICBM force is not maintained at the highest readiness. Nevertheless, a significant portion of the force is capable of reacting a few minutes after receipt of a launch order even if not at *Full Combat Readiness*. There does not appear to be any technical reason why a significant portion of the entire silo-based force cannot be held at *Full Combat Readiness* levels for long periods—that is, months.

## Ballistic Missile Submarines

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The new D-class SSBNs could launch their missiles from their home ports, or very close to them. Units of other classes, however, would require, even with high-speed transits, about six days to reach suitable launch areas for US targets.

## Strategic Bombers

6. The Soviets do not normally maintain any strategic bombers at high readiness. The long-range bombers and tankers in Long Range Aviation (LRA) are concentrated at a relatively small number of bases—a practice which constitutes a degree of vulnerability. Also we believe that they are not maintained in a condition appropriate for immediate launch. Thus, the launch of the Soviet strategic bomber force from its peacetime posture would require at least several hours,

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7. Even without launching aircraft, it would require several hours to bring LRA forces to *Full Combat Readiness* at their home bases.

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If sufficient time were

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available, most LRA regiments probably would disperse in order to reduce vulnerability. The entire process probably would require many hours if not days.

#### Strategic Defensive Forces

8. Soviet strategic defensive forces are normally maintained in a state of *Constant Combat Readiness*, but there are various readiness conditions for weapon systems. Only a small portion of defensive forces are ever at the higher readiness conditions. There seems to be a standard procedure of rotating units between the various readiness conditions so that, at any one time, at least some components of a major unit are immediately available for combat.

9. **Air Defense Aviation.** The Warsaw Pact maintains a small portion of its air defense aircraft in a high state of readiness for air defense emergencies. In peacetime, two to four aircraft from each of the Soviet and East European air defense regiments are kept on alert and ready to take off within minutes. It would take about four hours for most of the other regimental aircraft to reach full readiness. If redeployment to dispersal airfields were required, the time for the entire force to reach full readiness would increase to between eight and 24 hours.

10. **Air Defense SAMs and Radars.** Surface-to-air missile regiments and brigades are not normally held in the highest readiness stage. Instead, a rotation system is used to maintain a "quick reaction" capability. Under this system, one or two battalions of a regiment or brigade are held in a condition which allows them to be ready to fire in less than 10 minutes. It could take as long as two hours, however, for an entire regiment or brigade to reach *Full Combat Readiness*. Units engaging in maintenance would take several additional hours to reach full readiness. The radar elements of these SAM units have similar constraints.

11. **Antiballistic Missiles.** About 75 percent of the launchers in the Moscow antiballistic missile system are normally equipped with missiles, and much of the system would be capable of operation within the time available from tactical warning. The radars require up to five minutes to reach operational status, after which the missiles on launchers could be fired immediately.

12. **Antisatellite System.** The Soviet orbital interceptor has been operational since 1971. After a decision to prepare the system for launch has been made, we estimate that it would take about one day to

assemble and check out two interceptors in the launch area support facility. When these preparations are finished, the two interceptors could be moved to the launch pads, fueled, and launched in about one hour.

#### B. Theater Forces

13. Soviet theater forces—ground, air, and naval units—are normally maintained at various peacetime preparedness conditions. Soviet forces in Eastern Europe are maintained at the highest levels of preparedness. Soviet forces in the border military districts, both in the western USSR and along the Chinese border, are less prepared. Those forces in the interior of the USSR are maintained at even lower levels of readiness.

14. The following discussion addresses both Soviet and East European forces since all of them in Central Europe are arrayed against NATO. Indeed, the Soviets have placed increased reliance on the East Europeans in recent years. East European forces also reflect Soviet readiness practices. But East European forces, for the most part, are less ready than their Soviet counterparts in Eastern Europe.

#### Ground Forces

15. In peacetime Warsaw Pact ground force units, together with their support and command and control structures, are maintained at widely varying strength and preparedness levels. As these units mobilize during the transition to a war footing, they would reach *Full Combat Readiness* over varying periods of time. Most divisions which are active in peacetime could be filled out within a few days. But Pact doctrine calls for the use of such divisions as parts of army and *front*\* organizations and many army- and *front*-level elements particularly rear service units, require longer to mobilize than the combat units which they support. Additional units, with little or no real structure in peacetime, would continue to mobilize throughout the course of a war. In calculating the time at which various portions of this force can be applied against potential Pact opponents, such factors as the time necessary to set up effective command and control, logistics, and transportation facilities, movement time, and time necessary for preparations for combat also must be considered.

16. The combat elements of Soviet ground forces in Central Europe would require some preparation to

\*For a description of a Pact *front*, see the inset box referenced in paragraph 55 of chapter IV.

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achieve full combat effectiveness. But, if required to act immediately, Soviet divisions can vacate their garrisons within about two hours and could conduct combat operations soon thereafter. Although most of the East European forces are manned at lower levels, some of their divisions could conduct limited combat operations on short notice. These Soviet and East European divisions maintain detailed alerting procedures and rehearse them frequently.

17. The Soviets maintain seven airborne divisions in a high state of readiness, all inside the USSR. Using all of the some 700 medium and heavy aircraft that belong to the USSR's military air transport fleet, the Soviets could move the assault elements of two divisions. This would be unlikely, however, because many of the aircraft would be needed to fulfill other high-priority requirements that would arise at the outset of a war. In a more likely case, the Soviets could deliver the assault elements of one airborne division, with three days' supplies, to a distance of 1,600 kilometers (850 nautical miles) using as few as 350 medium transports. These elements would have limited ground mobility, however. There is also one Polish airborne division, but it would depend mainly on Soviet aircraft for mass airborne operations. (See also paragraph 29 of this annex.)

18. Significant portions of the Soviet and other Warsaw Pact rear services required for wartime operations do not exist during peacetime. The Warsaw Pact has developed plans for rapid mobilization of major elements, such as medical and transport units, from the civilian economy to support Pact operations in a war with NATO. The following items are but a few of those required for such a shift (the time required to mobilize and deploy these elements would vary):

- Organize and deploy large rear service units (medical, maintenance, POL, transportation, administrative, etc.) forward to the battle area. Each *front* could have some 100,000 personnel and 60,000 vehicles in its rear service organization.
- Provide theater, *front*, and army units with enough depot supplies (fixed and mobile) to meet established norms; these norms are designed to assure adequate supplies throughout an offensive despite some disruption of the resupply effort.
- Reorganize the transportation system (including the lines of communication) between the USSR and the forward area to support a NATO-Pact

war. This includes, among other things, mobilizing large rail and highway transportation units from the civilian sector.

19. The Soviets and their Pact allies do not maintain wartime command, control, and communications networks in peacetime. The establishment of the wartime structure for command and control would be complex and time consuming. The Soviets' concern for tight, centralized control over military operations makes it very unlikely that they would elect to begin combat operations without adequate command and control. At a minimum, Moscow authorities would need multiple means of direct communications with *front* and army commanders. In addition, within the *front*, the establishment of communications links necessary for battle management is critical. Without such links, commanders could not control their forces. A few measures that would have to be accomplished include:

- Establishment of extensive communications and data transmission networks.
- Activation of command posts, including deployment of commanders and staffs.
- Dispatch of operations groups and liaison personnel.
- Review and adjustment of battle plans and issuance of combat orders.

20. The actual time it would take the Pact to convert from a peacetime to a wartime command and control system is not known.

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21. In a crisis in which the Pact had some control over the timing of events, the Pact would plan to prepare the ground forces for war in a phased, deliberate manner. Initial preparations would be aimed at improving combat efficiency, and at enhancing readiness to mobilize and would bring selected force elements to *Full Combat Readiness*. The phased implementation toward full readiness is designed to assure the availability of forces appropriate to different stages of an international crisis and to

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increase the chances of an orderly and efficient transition to a war footing while at the same time avoiding premature or unnecessary disruption of the economy. In a slowly developing crisis the Pact, because of the phased nature of the progression toward readiness, would be able to hold most ground forces at preparedness plateaus short of *Full Combat Readiness*. If the Pact used a phased mobilization plan, our best evidence indicates that it would take six days to bring its ground forces as well as a large portion of its logistics and command and control structures to *Full Combat Readiness*. This assumes that there were no delays or plateaus in the implementation of full readiness. This does not consider deployment and final preparation time for particular postures which the Pact might desire to attain prior to initiating hostilities. Depending on the posture desired, either the same or more time would be required.

22. Alternatively—in an extremely urgent situation—all Pact ground forces could move directly and simultaneously from a peacetime posture to full readiness. This procedure would maximize mobilization speed but would result in greater confusion and lower initial combat efficiency. Using this procedure, our best evidence indicates that the Pact would plan to cut in half the time required for its ground forces and a large portion of its logistics and command and control structures to reach *Full Combat Readiness*. Once again, this does not consider total time needed to achieve a particular desired Pact operational posture.

#### Tactical Air Forces

23. Some Tactical Aviation regiments are prepared to conduct limited combat operations within three hours, and most within 10 hours, utilizing existing peacetime strengths, locations, and command and control means. The principal problem areas appear to involve the peacetime manning practices of Pact air forces and the need to set up extensive command and control facilities prior to major offensive operations.

24. Pact air forces in Central Europe have heretofore been judged to be manned at or near their intended wartime operating strengths. Recent evidence indicates that there is some undermanning, particularly in support units.

25. Another factor which appears to be adversely affecting the current readiness of specific Soviet and possibly non-Soviet Pact air force units is maintenance. Defectors have indicated that Soviet units which are receiving new aircraft have experienced difficulties in

meeting the concomitant requirements for additional trained maintenance personnel. In some cases shortages of such personnel have persisted for more than a year following delivery of new aircraft.

26. We estimate that it would take a minimum of 48 hours for the Pact air armies in Central Europe to deploy their wartime command post structure and establish the command and control required to engage in offensive air combat operations in support of a *front* commander. We believe, however, that it would take a total of about 72 hours to make the command and control preparations (including the updating of battle plans) needed to support a coordinated theater-wide air offensive, including LRA, against NATO airfields, nuclear weapon sites, and other priority targets as envisaged in Pact plans.

27. The other requisite preparations for a major offensive action could probably be accomplished within the time specified above. These would include any final maintenance and the arming and fueling of aircraft, and the activation of additional airfields for dispersal or recovery purposes.

28. The introduction of additional aircraft from the western USSR into Central Europe would not be required prior to the initiation of combat. Should they decide to deploy these aircraft from the western USSR into the forward area, however, the Soviets could complete this deployment within 72 hours of the decision to do so.

#### Military Transport Aviation

29. We estimate that about 80 percent of the Soviet Military Transport Aviation (VTA) aircraft are operationally ready on a day-to-day basis and, like Tactical Aviation units, would require little preparation to reach full combat readiness. We estimate that about six to eight hours would be required to recover those aircraft which are flying routine training missions, service them, change crews as required, brief the new missions, and reconfigure the aircraft for their designated missions. During the transition to a war footing, civil aircraft (for example, those of Aeroflot) would be placed under military control. This might take several days or more.

#### Nuclear Forces

30. In addition to the tactical nuclear systems, such as army surface-to-surface rockets and missiles and tactical nuclear aircraft which are integral parts of the theater air and ground forces, a portion of the longer

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range missile, bomber, and ballistic missile submarines just discussed also provide theater support. These include medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, intermediate-range bombers, and some support by naval delivery systems such as older class ballistic missile submarines. Most of the strategic and peripheral strike systems used in a theater support role could be brought to *Full Combat Readiness* within hours as could theater-based tactical nuclear aircraft. Ready ground forces surface-to-surface rockets and missiles is complicated by the requirement to process and distribute warheads from central storage areas. More than one day would likely elapse before a major portion of this force could be ready to conduct nuclear operations.

#### Naval Forces

31. **Principal Surface Combatants.** The normal peacetime status of Soviet major surface units is as follows:

Activity	Percent of Force	Status
Major Overhaul .....	20-25	Unavailable
Minor Repair or Refresher Training	25-30	Reduced Readiness
Home Waters .....	35-40	Operable
Deployed .....	10-15	At Sea

Under normal peacetime conditions about half the Soviet major surface combatant force is ready for combat or could be ready within a day or two.

If the readiness of naval forces were increased during an extended period of tension, the number of ships able to put to sea on short notice would be increased, while training and maintenance probably would be accelerated to improve combat effectiveness. Many of the combatants undergoing minor repair or in refresher training following repairs probably could regain an

acceptable level of combat readiness within a week or two and most could be made combat ready within two months. The rest of the force—in long-term overhaul or modification—would be unavailable for combat operations even with several months' preparation.

32. The operationally available ships in home waters provide the Soviet Navy with a capability for contingency deployments in crisis situations, but transit times to operating areas are substantial—from days to weeks. Ships of the Northern Fleet would require about three days to reach the critical operating areas in the vicinity of Iceland.

#### 33. Attack Submarines.

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34. The Soviets' practice of keeping most of their submarines in port and ready for deployment makes a large number of submarines rapidly available for action in areas close to the USSR. But unless there were time for transit to Atlantic Ocean areas—1,500 to 3,000 nautical miles distant—at best the Soviets would have only a few submarines on station in those waters.

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35. **Naval Aviation.** Naval aircraft normally maintain a low level of peacetime activity. Most naval aircraft could reach full combat readiness in several hours; time to operating areas in Europe could take several hours, while deployment to overseas airfields, such as those in Cuba or Guinea, would take longer.

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